BLACK CAT

CLEVER SHORT STORIES

The Black Cat

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Contents

Eighty Rods North	*Chart Pitt*	3
The Shrine of An-ling	*Carroll K. Michener*	9
The Green Parrot at Ricotti's	*Louis Schneider*	13
Springs Eternal	*Weare Holbrook*	20
Painted Mary	*F. A. Disleigh*	26
The Locomotive With the Evil Eye	*Louis Fitzgerald*	32
Friends on Big Thunder	*Hapsburg Liebe*	38
The Black Cat Club		42

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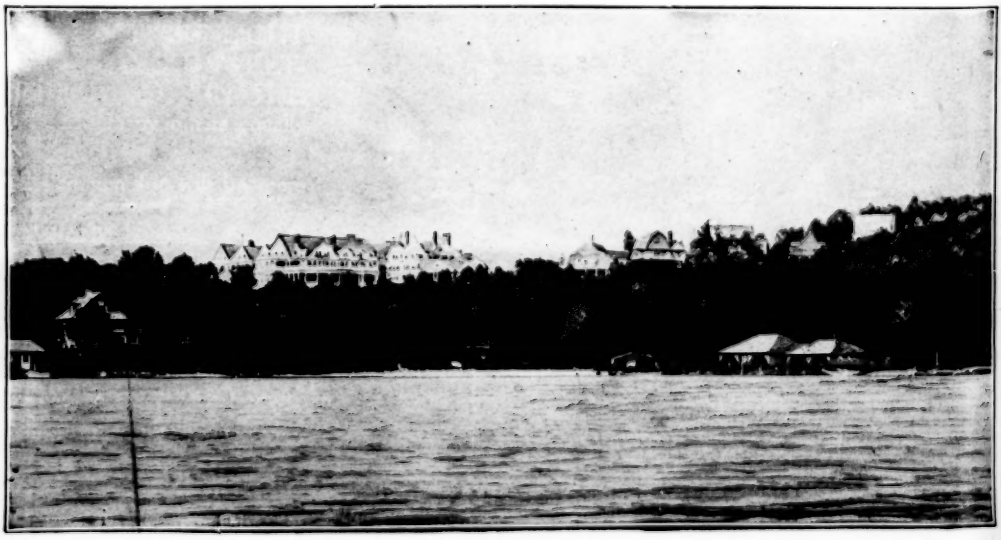

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Which kind of woman are you?

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EIGHTY RODS NORTH

By CHART PITT

Caribou Knowlton, prospecting for a change of diet, meets a lady. He loses his appetite, his heart, and later on, his sense of direction.

IT WAS the season of the year when most prospectors were outbound with a pack upon their backs, going to try their luck in the golden raffle along some creek in the Alaskan hinterland. But Caribou Knowlton was headed toward town, and he was travelling light.

Just above Snow Flea a half dozen trails came together, and from there in, it was wider and dustier and they called it "the road" in memory of other highways they had known back in the States.

When Caribou reached this spot in his journey he paused to pull his clothing into shape. It wasn't an extensive job. He wore no coat, and his gray flannel shirt was open at the throat. His hat was of gray felt, without too wide a brim; an article that he could work in and sleep in, without showing much effects of ill-usage. His corduroy breeches were tucked into the tops of high shoes—but these were muddy.

As he scraped the northern muck from his hob-nailed soles, the wind came puffing up the little valley, bringing with it the distant tinkle of a piano played upon the high keys—a lilting rag-time that seemed out of place in the clogging silence of the gloomy swamps.

There was a new recklessness in the man's gait as he swung down to the town. His boyish face was touched with an eager flush.

Like all the rest of the miners along the creeks, Caribou Knowlton made more or less regular visits to Snow Flea. Sometimes it was a fresh supply of tobacco or beans he needed; but to-day it was just a whim of his to put his long legs under the counter at the Pay Streak Restaurant, and have an old-fashioned feed, like Mother used to rig up for Sunday. Nor was he unresponsive to the glad-handed cheer that hovered about the Gold Pan Club, where big Hank Grashorn peddled wine, women and song to a horde of homeless miners.

Night was beginning to settle in the little valley, when Caribou entered the town. Here and there the yellow flare of an oil lamp blinked out of the twilight. In front of the Gold Pan an acetylene light blazed its white glory among the shadows. The rag-time piano flung out its brazen challenge to men whose only home was a shifting camp among the hills; but Caribou turned his back upon the glittering temptation, and walked on up the street. He had come to town for a square meal, and a square meal he was going to have. That was his one and only ear-mark that made him a little different from the other boys who came to Snow Flea. Even among a breed of men who are very stubborn about admitting defeat, Caribou Knowlton was known as a stayer.

He pushed the restaurant door open and stamped into the smoky, smelly atmosphere that had lured him away from his bean pot back in the hills. He climbed upon a high stool, and began spreading butter upon a piece of fluffy bread. For a moment he was too busy to pay any attention to those about him.

"Well, kid, do you intend to fill up on bread?" a voice challenged him from across the counter.

Caribou looked up—and dropped the slice butter-side down. His blue eyes widened into a stare, and his jaw hung limp. There beside the pie rack was a girl like those he used to know back home.

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Her cheeks were flushed by the rich, red blood that flowed beneath the satiny skin, not the sort of roses that blossomed in the cheeks of the women over at the Gold Pan. Her golden curls were home-grown, and never had known peroxide.

"Well, kid, what you going to eat—or did you just come up to rubber?" she insisted a trifle more firmly.

Caribou opened his mouth, but the words refused to come. He had followed the gold-lure into places the map-makers never had seen; but always it had been a loveless land, where the lilt of a good woman's laughter was as startling as the bellow of a gun—and twice as deadly.

"I'll take—some bacon and beans." He blurted out the first thing that came into his mind. Back in his camp among the hills was a sheet-iron cooking-pot nearly full of that same plebeian concoction that has helped blaze the wilderness trails from the banana-belt to the pole. But Caribou Knowlton was in no condition just then to remember such trifles. He bolted his plate of beans, threw down a silver dollar, and hurried out of the room, not even waiting to get his thirty cents in change.

The wilderness night had fallen like a black blanket over the town. Here and there a faint yellow speck marked the location of an uncurtained window. But they only served to emphasize the brooding loneliness of the surrounding swamps. Only one spot in that straggling town showed the throb of night life. Over the door of the Gold Pan, the big acetylene lamp sputtered out its three-hundred candle-power of glittering white light. Hank Grashhorn hadn't wasted his money on that illumination for nothing. It called out its compelling invitation to an army of homeless men—and they answered as the moth answers the challenge of the flame.

Caribou Knowlton had walked twenty-five miles since breakfast, and was about ready for the blankets. Over at Hank's Place he could find a bed. The Gold Pan was unlike anything else in that land of boom towns. It was a huge department-store, where you could buy most anything advertised in the city papers—and lots of things besides. It was a department store—one such as you might expect to find on some back street of hell.

Like the rest of the human moths that drifted in from the hills, Caribou shuffled along toward the glaring light.

He sat down upon the rickety board-walk outside, and listened to the high-pitched tinkle of the piano. He flooded himself with the glaring glow of the burning carbide. It took him back to the old home days before he had struck out to earn his fortune. Somehow he couldn't bring himself to enter the building, for he knew the spell would be broken if he did. Many things there were at Hank's Place, that the home-folks couldn't have tolerated.

Miners and prospectors passed in and out. Some flung a word of greeting to the figure that perched upon the board walk, but Caribou answered them only with grunts of recognition. He was thinking about the old-fashioned feed he had come to town to get—and the plate of beans he had consumed against his better judgment.

At last he scrambled to his feet, let his belt out another notch, and headed toward the Pay Streak Restaurant. When he pushed the door open he had his order on the tip of his tongue.

"What's the matter, kid—come back to get your thirty cents?" The blue eyed girl behind the counter didn't try to hide her contempt for a piker.

Caribou ignored the thrust. He clambered back upon the same stool he had quitted an hour before.

"What you going to eat this time?" the waiter mumbled as she whipped her hair into shape in front of the glass.

"Bacon and be—no, I'll be damned if I do!" he exploded. "Give me a pot of oysters—and a T-bone steak with mashed potatoes for a chaser—and a slab of lemon-pie to take the taste out of my mouth."

He had to let his belt out another notch before he finished the dessert. At last he waddled to his feet, and tossed a five-dollar gold piece on the counter. "Keep the

change—to buy yourself a chew of gum," he mumbled awkwardly, still embarrassed because the little hash-girl had thought him a piker.

"You sure are a swell spender—almost as free as Hank Grashorn." There was a new light in the girl's eyes as she leaned across the counter, and offered her hand. "My name is Salome Pless—and I'm glad to meet you, kid. Drop around whenever you are in town."

"I'll sure do that, Miss Pless," he promised as he left the restaurant.

They rigged him up a bed at the Gold Pan, but it was some time before he could get to sleep. He seemed all stirred up inside; and the prospect of returning to his pot of beans back in the hills didn't appeal to him in the least.

Caribou Knowlton slept—and dreamed. There hadn't been a night so crammed full of dreams since the days when he kept a yellow backed thriller hidden away in the woodshed. But it was neither Indians nor outlaws that galloped across the extravagant stage of his imagination—but Salome Pless with a platter heaped with all the good eats that ever had been cooked in the world.

The next morning found him at the Pay Streak, mincing at his food, and feasting his eyes upon a vision of loveliness across the counter. He lingered over that meal as never before. He would have to start back for the hills that day, and he knew that the camp out there among the dog-toothed peaks never would be the same. He realized that his soul had become hungry for the comradeship of honest girls such as he used to know back home. While Salome, with her gum-chewing and small-shop banter, was hardly in their class, yet she appeared to be honest, and she was as fresh and invigorating as a spring morning.

His breakfast was finished at last, and he rose to go.

"Thinking of staying in Snow Flea?" he asked casually, although his blood was going faster than it had for years.

Salome Pless shook out her head of golden curls, and took a fleeting glance at the mirror above the pie rack.

"Guess I'll stay till some fellow comes along with a gold mine—and marries me." The girl tried to laugh, but there was a hard, business-like look in her blue eyes.

Caribou Knowlton grabbed his hat, and started for the door.

"What's the matter, kid—getting cold feet? Better come back and say good-bye."

"I was starting after that gold-mine you spoke about—and I don't want any crawfishing when I come back with it."

"Mean it, kid?"

Caribou Knowlton gave her a level, searching look.

"Miss Salome, I was just a big, awkward kid when I came to Alaska—and I haven't been outside since. I've spent my time back in the hills—you know what that means."

"Hank Grashorn says the fellows along the gold creeks are mostly a bunch of women-haters—if that's what you mean?"

"Don't you ever think it, they ain't. Perhaps they don't go crazy over the women that Hank brings into Snow Flea—but they would over a girl like you. I can't even imagine a man coming in from the creeks, and sitting here eating white man's grub, and talking to you—and being the same afterward."

"Looks like I was going to have the pick of the whole country, eh?" the girl laughed.

"Not what you could notice, you ain't—you've done your picking already. I told you I was going after that mine—and I'm going after it *hard*."

"All right, kid—you look good to me," the girl laughed. "You run along and find yourself a gold mine—and I'll marry you like I said I would."

"I'll do better than find myself a mine. We'll go up town and get a filing right—and I'll stake discovery for you."

An hour later Caribou Knowlton sat on the board walk in front of the Gold Pan, dangling his long legs into space, and fumbling with a brand new filing right that bore the name of Salome Pless. It seemed almost like a marriage license to him.

It was time to be hitting the trail, but he was hungry for another plate of mashed

potatoes—and the girl. So he headed for the Pay Streak. The restaurant door was open, and when Caribou stepped around the corner he could see the entire length of the room. He took one eager stride forward. Then he stopped short.

Bending over the counter, with their heads close in conversation, were Hank Grashorn and the girl. The dive-keeper's ham-like hand was spread out upon the polished boards, displaying a diamond as big as a young icicle.

Caribou ducked around the corner, and made his way up the side street—still hungry.

That afternoon Caribou Knowlton climbed the hill road, and turned into the trail that led to his wilderness camp. Upon every side the mountains lifted their naked fangs above the surrounding swamps; but they were a promise to him and not a threat.

THE spring went sky-rocketing by, like all springs of the high north do; and the lush summer days were steeped in sunshine and hard work.

Caribou Knowlton's camp was shifted about in the wilderness back of Snow Flea. From creek to creek he followed the stubborn quest of the gold. Every camp fire he kindled held the picture of a woman's face; and the night winds whispered strange, new things to his listening ears. The flare of sunrise above the dog-toothed peaks called him to his self-inflicted peonage, and the sunsets that flamed above the black spruce swamps were full of promise.

At last one day Caribou Knowlton followed a goat trail to the height of land, and looked down into an empire primeval. Behind him lay the more or less familiar valleys, where the foaming creeks all rushed southward, to the wide spreading arms of the Yukon and the distant beaches of Bering Sea. Over there lay Snow Flea, cooked food, and Salome Pless. But before him the great, deep valleys lay unpeopled and silent, with never the scar of a human footprint upon the northern moss. The lonely lakes lay brooding in the weird hush of the arctic back-lands, waiting for the welcome vision of a camp fire leaping in the velvet dusk. Caribou Knowlton cast one backward glance at the familiar topography, then plunged down into the unknown.

Here the black, swamp water crawled northward to the Colville—and the frozen shores of the Polar Sea. For years the man had prospected country where the streams ran to the south; and now that everything was suddenly turned around, he couldn't make the land lay right. The sunrises flared up out of what seemed to him the west, and the sunsets waved their bloody torches out of the east. Even the polestar seemed to ridicule him, blinking its eye out the southern sky—over where Snow Flea ought to be—but wasn't.

To one less familiar with the wilderness, this state of affairs would have spelled disaster; but to Caribou Knowlton it meant nothing. He knew where the home-trail lay—and when he had found the gold it would be a simple matter to find his way back to Snow Flea.

In the endless hush of those unpeopled valleys, the soul of Caribou rose above the sordid gold-hunt. It was the blood of the pioneer. It was the unmapped lands that were pulling him onward into their lonely fastness.

One day he stumbled into a little valley, and followed the downstream course of a creek that flowed into the unknown.

Suddenly he paused, and the primeval lure was swept away by the modern craze for gold. In a choking surge of emotion his heart went back to Snow Flea, and the girl who had sent him out upon that stubborn quest. For there at his feet gleamed the yellow nuggets he had come so far to find.

Before the northern night came down Caribou had gathered a small fortune in float-gold, and was almost ready to turn his face toward the town. At the first peep of day he began staking out the claims. True to his promise the piece of creek-bed where he found the gold would go to Salome. The remainder of the little valley would be his blind chance in the golden raffle of the North. He looked about him for a suitable land-mark from

which to begin his location. Over at the foot of the opposite hill, a solitary birch-tree lifted its light green branches above the scattered and frost stunted spruces.

Beginning at the birch his location lines ran due north eighty rods, thence across the valley forty rods, then south eighty rods, then across to point of beginning. His own claim was simply located in reference to this first staking, described as number one below. He posted both notices upon the birch, and hurried back to the creek. Then he shouldered his gold-loaded pack, and followed the twisting wilderness trails back to Snow Flea.

THE LITTLE town was sleeping under a blue blanket of haze, when Caribou Knowlton came tramping down the hill-road, and made straight for the Pay Streak Restaurant. There was Salome standing by the pie rack as sweet and wholesome as the day he left. The stools were empty; so Caribou swung a heavy poke from his pocket, and rolled a handful of yellow nuggets out on the counter.

Salome's blue eyes opened with a snap. "You're going to leave that poke with me, ain't you, Caribou? You can't afford to spend your money foolishly, now that you're going to settle down."

"I'll do something better than that. I've staked discovery for you, as I said I would. I'm going over and get the claims registered just as soon as I get something to eat—I'll bring the receipt right back—and you want to be thinking about what you're going to be married in.

An hour later he was back with the Register's receipt. Salome read it over carefully—then leaned over the counter and kissed him.

"What you going to be doing in the morning, Caribou?" she petted.

"Hunting up the preacher—I'll have him over here for breakfast."

"What about my wedding-gown? Better leave me your poke."

Caribou scratched his head thoughtfully. "Well, no. I'm sort of superstitous about a thing like that—it might bring bad luck. Back home the bride always furnished her own clothes. If you was short of cash—your face is good for anything they got in town. I showed the boys my poke, and they know I staked discovery for you. One fellow said I must be soft, turning everything over to a woman. Guess he didn't know what's between us, eh?"

"Well, have it your own way, Mr. Rich Man," the girl pouted into the mirror.

Caribou started for the door. "I'm going over and roll in; haven't had a regular night's sleep since I started for town. I'll have to get me a new suit of clothes, but I'll be here for breakfast, right on the tick of the clock."

The big acetylene light above the door of the Gold Pan was still blinking its invitations to the early risers, the next morning, when Caribou Knowlton crawled out of his blankets, and headed for the shack where the preacher lived.

Everything was silent there. No smoke curled up from the rusty stove pipe. After repeated hammerings, there was the sound of naked feet shuffling about inside. A moment later the old Sky Pilot came to the door in his nightshirt.

"Sorry, Stranger," he began, rubbing the sleep from his eyes, "but I was called up in the night to marry Hank Grashorn and the girl from the Pay Streak. Wasn't thinking of getting married yourself was you?"

Caribou felt himself withering up within his new suit.

"No thank you—no wedding-bells for me," he lied like a politician. "Some of us boys heard the rumor—and I came over to get the straight of it. We wanted to give him a little celebration."

"You'll have to wait till they get back. Mr. Grashorn took his bride outside, to organize a company for his new mine—the Dismal Valley Gold Company he calls it. They're going to give me three shares of stock for performing the ceremony."

Caribou Knowlton went back to the business section, shed his fine raiment, and bought the things he would require for a long journey and a protracted stay. Then he headed back for Dismal Valley, where the streams ran northward, and the pole-star blazed out of the southern sky. There was no place that suited his present mood

like that crazy land where even the sunsets had gone loco.

A straggling flock of stampeders followed him into the wilderness; but the little valley was more than covered by the two claims, and they scattered over the country in search of other treasure-laden sands.

Caribou at once began operations upon the claim he had staked for himself. Day after day he rooted up the gravel, but no gold rewarded his efforts.

One by one the other prospectors came straggling back, without even a color in their pokes. The gold at the head of the valley had been nothing but a freak, that could not be explained by glacial drift or alluvial wash.

The feet of the stampeders had beaten a more or less definite trail into Dismal Valley, and Caribou himself would soon have to be following back to the settlements, for already there was a feel of winter in the air.

Then one morning he looked up from his work, to see three Indian ponies coming down the valley. It was Big Hank and the ex-hash-girl. A stranger was with them.

"How's the luck?" Grashorn called innocently as he rode up; but there was a look in his fat face that made it plain to Caribou that the returning prospectors had told all about the conditions in Dismal Valley.

"Not a color on mine," Knowlton admitted.

"This is Mr. Paget here," Hank nodded toward the stranger. "He's helping me organize my new company. We might be able to use that lower claim, to sort of pad out our holdings—ought to be worth a couple hundred dollars to us, if you took it in stock. Where does the lines run?"

"Your claim starts at the birch tree, and runs eighty rods north, then squares back to the birch again—you know the way they generally mark 'em out."

"*Eighty rods north!*" Hank Grashorn bellowed. "You low down dirty skunk, you been looting my claim! Looks like you had it clean looted already. There's a law for that sort of work."

For a moment Caribou Knowlton was too puzzled to speak. Then a flock of geese went squawking by—headed north in the face of the coming winter.

He squinted at them for a minute, and an understanding look crept into his eyes. Then he burst into laughter as he picked up his shovel and headed upstream.

"I forgot all about being turned around when I posted them notices—and like a fool I went and located discovery for myself, and I've wasted a lot of valuable time digging around on somebody else's claim."

He laughed into Hank Grashorn's bloated face as Hank rode by an hour later, headed for Snow Flea. The ex-hasher turned her head away as she passed.

THE MAN WHO LEARNED TO KILL *by R. Y. Gilbert* will be the lead story for July. An able and engaging villain who believes that he might learn to kill if he had sufficient provocation presently has the opportunity to prove his scholarship. There is more of romance than of bloodshed to this story notwithstanding the title.

THE SHRINE OF AN-LING

By CARROLL K. MICHENER

Petty Officer Davis, thinking to retain nothing of the orient but memories, becomes aware that the ties that bind him to Chinese customs and a Chinese girl are not easily broken.

IN a certain city of China there is a bronze Buddha, at the feet of which millions of women have knelt in obeisance. A foreign missionary, who goes often to this place of idolatry, has made the discovery there of what is not often recognized as truth. She has learned, she says, that for every soul there is a shrine, and that in every shrine there is some measure of divinity. This would lead one to suppose, I think, that the missionary is a person of much soul. It leads, too, into the story of An-ling, as I have been able to gather it from the missionary and from the shy "pidgin English" of An-ling herself.

The story concerns a certain American sailor, a petty officer named Davis. It begins with the afternoon when Davis, strolling up an unfrequented avenue in Shanghai, encountered An-ling in the archway of a tenement alley. She attracted his attention because she was prettier, and in more or less undefinable ways different, from the type of Chinese girls commonly seen loitering in alleyways. She wore a white knitted wool cap, strung with blue ribbon—the kind much affected by Chinese girls in the days following the Revolution. Her hair, jet and straight, was done in semi-foreign style, and the lower portion of her crown was unshaven. She was adorned with a delicate sea-green, flowered-silk coat, reaching below the hips, with slits at the sides. The sleeves were long and tight-fitting, with lace cuffs. A broad, upturned collar completely covered her throat and came well up around unrouged cheeks. Unlike the majority of her countrywomen she wore a black, flowered-silk skirt, somewhat after the foreign fashion. Her feet, unbound, but doll-sized, were encased in silk slippers.

Davis paused with a "chin-chin" greeting, but the girl appeared to be shy and stepped back into the shadow of the archway.

"What thing?" he asked, dropping into "pidgin," but she only hid her face in her arms without speaking. He bantered her with some of the Chinese phrases commonly acquired by foreign residents in China. Perceiving that he showed no inclination to leave, the girl lowered her arms from her face. She hesitated a moment, then put one slender hand on his arm and led him down the long alley to a door beneath a dingy, octagonal street lamp.

A wrinkled old woman was sipping tea and warming her hands over a tiny iron stove upon which simmered the omnipresent Chinese hot-water kettle. An open door at the end of the diminutive room disclosed another room, furnished with a replica of the iron stove, a *kang* (which is Chinese for "couch"), and a black, carved-wood bed built into the wall, with curtains draped from four ceiling-high posts. On the wall, at the foot of the bed, was a shelf surmounted by a cracked mirror and flanked by two long, red scrolls bearing rows of black, well-formed ideographs. On the shelf stood a cheap, foreign-made alarm clock, a pair of brass candle holders from which protruded bundles of half-burned incense sticks, and a half-dozen Chinese toilet articles.

Davis sat down and motioned the girl to a seat on the opposite side of the table. The old woman hobbled out into the alley and in a shrill voice began an altercation with a ricksha coolie.

From her reluctant, abbreviated answers in "pidgin," Davis learned, by asking the girl many questions, that when evil spirits took away her mother (the mission people said it was merely because of unboiled cabbage leaves) there was no longer any one to buy rice for grandmother. So, last week, the old *maman* had taken her from the mission school, and that was why she stood in an alleyway like the thousands of her sisters.

The old woman, having exhausted her shrill vocabulary on the coolie, returned to the doorway and peered within, interrupting the inquiry. She uttered an impatient exclamation, and moved away down the alley. Davis went to the door, watching her, and the girl followed, a look of alarm in her eyes at his movement.

"Suppose you no stop, maman makee beat," she said.

"She's too old; you're young and strong."

But the girl shook her head. Neither her vocabulary nor his comprehension would have sufficed to explain to him the operation of China's social law of filial veneration and obedience.

Davis reached a sudden conclusion.

"Do you want to go back to the mission school?"

"When maman die—then I go back."

"No, *now*—do you want to go back *now?*"

But the girl could not understand. How was it possible to go back when the gods had decreed otherwise?

"Suppose I 'pay' you rice, clothes, house—"

This, at least, was comprehensible, and the girl's face brightened.

"Oh, you wanchee my belong wife pidgin?"

Whereupon Petty Officer Davis reddened under his sea-burnt skin.

This initial embarrassment did not prevent Davis from accomplishing the arrangement he had suggested. Some thrifty stipulations were insisted upon by the old woman, but even these were disposed of with satisfaction. And in the end An-ling was able to return to the mission school. The arrangement of her domestic affairs, of course, she did not explain there, and it was a very long time afterward that the mission folk knew anything about them. They learned the circumstances in a devious manner, through certain events connected with the departure of the U. S. S. Hiawatha from its China station, homeward-bound.

As the Hiawatha slipped from her anchorage in the river, opposite the Bund, and drifted downstream with the ebbing tide, a passenger sampan bobbed along for a time in the vessel's wake. In the starlight its gondola canopy would have been visible to anyone on the afterdeck of the ship, but not the small figure hidden in the canopy's shadow.

Beyond the Bund gardens the pace of the vessel became too swift for the old sampan man, who paused in his quick plying of the single oar to wipe streaming perspiration from his face. He shouted a query in Chinese, but the girl made no reply. So without further ado he turned the curved prow of the sampan upstream.

With the change in direction the girl was no longer able to see the glowing lights of the warship. This roused her from the abstraction which had rendered her deaf to the boatman's inquiries, and she scolded at him over the top of the canopy.

"Quickly, the other way!" she demanded, in voluble Chinese. But the old boatman gave no ear to her and continued upstream.

The girl remained standing and fixed her eyes upon the receding lights of the Hiawatha. Round a bend in the river the ship was rapidly disappearing. In another moment it was gone. A great sigh escaped from her lips and she crouched behind the canopy, gazing overboard at the gleaming river. With a shudder she thrust one silk-clad leg over the side of the sampan till it touched the surface. She drew it back with a start, and then, carefully, lest she should attract the boatman's attention, lowered herself over the edge and slipped noiselessly into the cool waters. The old boatman, dreaming of God knows what Buddhistic paradise, paddled on alone.

Petty Officer Davis stood at the port rail of the Hiawatha, watching the vanish-

ing lights of Shanghai. It would have been difficult to say what was his state of mind, for he did not seem to share the home-going elation of his shipmates. Still, there was one indication that might have been worth something. Before the last of the city's lights had vanished he unfolded a pocket-worn letter and fingered it thoughtfully. It was the letter of a certain girl in San Francisco, whom he had made promises to wed. But that, of course, had been three years ago.

There was no need of re-reading the letter, even if that had been possible by the starlight. He knew its contents pretty well by heart.

"Only three months more to wait!" was the way the letter began. "It seems a lifetime. Still, that's not so bad as the three years that have gone by. They seemed like eternity."

A little further on she had written: "You're always talking about those Chinese girls—as if I were interested in *them!* I do hope you're not going to figure in any Madame Butterfly scandal. *There,* I shouldn't have written that. It was cattish. But you do make me a little jealous of those Chinese women. I'm sure they must be interesting."

The Hiawatha crept on down river, winding in and out among the fields, following the sinuous ship channel. Only the feeble glow of a lantern at rare intervals gave life to the obscure landscape, or a slow-sailing junk casting long shadows from the channel lights.

Davis long ago should have been in his hammock. His pipe had gone out, yet he stood at the rail dreaming over again a dream that had been far too real:

It was early summer. The warm breath of mid-afternoon had subsided into the sleepy temperature of dusk. The insects had begun their summer-long chant, and the odor of China was everywhere. He strolled up an unfrequented avenue, lined with brick-castled foreign residences. Near the end of it the white-washed wall of a Chinese tenement abutted upon the street; and in the archway of the alley stood a girl....

The Hiawatha was nearing Woosung, at the mouth of the Whangpoo, where the vast extremity of the Yangtze pours its yellow flood straight out into a yellow sea. Davis stood erect, under the stimulus of a fixed idea. It was necessary to make a choice, and make it quickly, before the lights of Woosung were astern.

His memory was ablaze with visions of a little house just outside the foreign settlement—a house next the Chinese coffin-maker's shop, the first story of which was leased by a gray-headed whittler of Chinese violins. In the single, second-floor room of this house were set up against the wall the ancestral tablets of An-ling; for her mission experience had been not quite long enough to divorce her entirely from two thousand years of Confucianism.

Countless sunny afternoons—as often as he was able to get shore leave—had he spent with An-ling in this little refuge of the family lares and penates, watching her ply a busy needle in the fabrication of laces and embroideries, a skill inherent in Chinese women, but heightened in An-ling through her training in the mission; engaging in riotous games of Chinese dominoes; watching an army of boys in the shrill excitement of kite flying; overlooking a teeming street multitude touched with constant, colorful interest; sipping at inexhaustible supplies of tea or nibbling the kernels of roasted watermelon seeds which An-ling deftly cracked between her teeth, feeding them to him in bursts of merriment and with endless cooing in a tongue that was strange but not altogether unintelligible.

Terminating this oriental idyl there had come suddenly the Hiawatha's order to sail homeward. Of course, he might have asked for a service transfer. Other ships of the navy were on the China station. But there was that letter in his pocket—that one and others—from the girl in San Francisco. So An-ling's tears, bursting through the Chinese woman's tradition-built stoicism, were insufficient to move him. He was done with the ancient, slothful East. He shut his eyes to what unquestionably would be the dark fate of An-ling.

Yet here on the deck of the homeward-moving Hiawatha he recalled more force-

fully the desperate passion of the girl who would have slain herself for his pleasure. He remembered poignantly her farewell kisses—kisses that were very much dampened by her farewell tears.

Davis tucked his pipe into his blouse and peered attentively in the direction of the man on watch. Clouds and mist had created a thick obscurity. He pulled off his shoes, tied them together with a string run through a button-hole, and slipped furtively over the rail and down the rope ladder which a little later would be used by the pilot. The Hiawatha was swinging out into the Yangtze not twenty yards from the breakwater. Taking a deep breath, Davis lowered himself into the water, struck off desperately in order to clear the ship's port propeller, and then made his way with an easy side stroke to the sloping embankment of the breakwater. As he emerged and stood for a moment, breathing heavily, the Hiawatha turned slowly downstream and headed for the open sea.

When Davis reached the little house where he had established An-ling and her *maman* he found only the old woman. Since she spoke not a word of English he could learn nothing from her, though he could see plainly from her manner that something was amiss. All of An-ling's belongings were where they should be, but they were in unusual order. There were new candles in the holders that stood before the ancestral tablets.

Davis went to the mission school to ask for An-ling, but they said she was not there. This only added to the uneasiness he felt. He went to the neighbors, but there was an air of hostility about them. They were full of accusing silence. Then the old violin maker, whom he and An-ling had pestered so often with their pranks, took him next door to the coffin-maker's. He knew no English, but for his purpose the sign language was expressive enough. He pointed to the coffins.

Davis searched long for An-ling. He went to the hospitals and to the morgue. He found the old boatman who had taken An-ling in his sampan. The boatman was too frightened at first to tell anything. He seemed to think he might be hanged by the "foreign devils" for letting the girl drown herself. But, finally, through a school boy interpreter who could speak a little "pidgin" the whole story came out.

Davis resisted an impulse to forget his ruin in a grog shop. Caution reminded him that he was a deserter, and that the police arm of the service was long. So that night, cursing himself and whatever gods he feared, he sailed away in a steamer with ports of call in South China.

An old man from a fishing village downstream brought An-ling to the mission. His sons had taken her from the river, and his wives had kept her until she could tell where she belonged. An-ling was ill for a long time, but when she recovered she asked to be kept as a servant in the mission compound.

My missionary acquaintance who goes so often to the temple of the ugly Buddha, knows well the story of An-ling. Yet since she has a great soul, she puts nothing in the way of the girl's efforts to be a respectable Christian. This is perhaps remarkable only in view of the girl's unusual conception of divinity, for the missionary knows of the little shrine in An-ling's room—the tablets of her ancestors ranged behind a row of joss sticks, and surmounting them, side by side, a ragged kodak picture of Petty Officer Davis and a faded print showing the face of the Christ.

The missionary knows more of the matter than this: she has made inquiry concerning Davis. Of what she learned she has not spoken to An-ling. Nor has she referred to Davis's dramatic return from the ship, although An-ling has been told of it by the servants, and by her old grandmother whom she still supports.

But what was disclosed to the missionary about Davis would not in any case alter the sanctity of the shrine of An-ling. I have thought of this often as the missionary and I have stood looking into the calm smile of the Buddha—the tranquil gaze that doubtless perceives so much more of the verities of life than it cares to reveal. Perhaps the Buddha knows, too, that the sailor, Davis, who for An-ling still holds a place next to God, is the bartender of a very disreputable house in Hongkong.

THE GREEN PARROT AT RICOTTI'S

By LOUIS SCHNEIDER

A pickpocket, operating on a grand scale, makes the mistake of applying his methods to a more dangerous undertaking.

EDWARDS, the chief of police, straightened up in his chair, but kept speculative eyes bent on the paper before him.

"So you stick to the idea?"

"What else can you make of it?" asked Fenger, who stood beside him. "There are the red routes."

The chief jerked his head impatiently. "It's my opinion that you're on the wrong scent. You took this up a week ago—"

"After you and the force had worked on it for months," put in Fenger, "and matters getting worse."

The chief frowned. "And during the week," he continued, "you've had your way about having the place watched, and you've tailed all its wealthiest patrons out of its doors to guard them against loss. Still, several have been touched, and in all cases, as in nearly all before, the stuff has been lifted from—where? The inside pockets! You know as well as I do that that can be done only in a crowd, or where the victim is jostled; and yet not one of these touches was made under these circumstances—at least not near Ricotti's. Questioning proved that. It's getting on my nerves, yes, and I want it stopped; but when you have an idea that you can run these trails to earth in as public a place as Ricotti's, it's my opinion that for once you're on the wrong track, Fenger."

"Then what do you make of this?" insisted Fenger as he tapped with his pencil on the paper before them. "There is the story in red ink. Twenty cases, so far, and all big men. I've investigated closely; followed the trails closely from the time when these men were positive of still having had their various belongings, down to the time when they were just as positive that they no longer had them. The trails of all of these cases cross here, there, and everywhere over the business section of the city. The least—"

"They cross, naturally," interjected the chief, "and that is easily accounted for. All those who have been touched in this fashion are business men of standing, and therefore likely to frequent the same places."

"The least number of times that any trail crosses others this plat will show you," pursued Fenger, as if the other had not interrupted. "They all cross at Ricotti's—something they don't do anywhere else. Get away from that, if you can."

"I'm not trying to. Ricotti's is simply an A-1 place, widely known, and that fact alone will account for the trails crossing there."

"Yes," retorted Fenger drily, "and there are a dozen A-1 places scattered over this town, patronized by hundreds of well-to-do men. Why isn't there a network of trails such as these crossing at the other places?"

The chief merely stared at the paper.

"And let me tell you something more," continued Fenger. "You'll laugh when you hear it, but after a third victim had mentioned it I went and questioned all of them. Edwards, every one of those men had fed Ricotti's green parrot."

The chief did laugh. Finally he controlled himself. "They fed— You mean the parrot inside the entry there?"

Fenger nodded. "Just that. And they fed him at about the time they were touched. I don't know how to fit that in with the rest of the evidence, yet, but I'm going to try it."

"What next?" gibed the chief. "Beyond a doubt hundreds of men have fed that parrot. He's so placed that you're tempted to do it. I've done it myself. And you want to single out a score or so and say their having had their pockets picked is in some way connected with the fact that they fed him."

"I can drop the matter if you say so," began Fenger. "No—by George, I've never backed out of anything like it before, and I'll see this to a finish. It's the very novelty of the thought, the unusualness of it, that makes me lean toward the belief that the parrot has a—well, a talon in the matter, we'll say."

"I hope you'll succeed, and that soon," admitted the chief. "I'm sorry I laughed. I've said that this thing is getting on my nerves. That doesn't begin to tell it. They're—I've—this thing can't go much further, Fenger. All in all, nearly fifty thousand dollars worth of stuff has been lifted. Heuston, you know, was frisked for nearly eleven thousand in negotiable paper—Liberty Bonds, and what not."

"I can imagine how you feel. The pressure on you must be getting rather strong. If I knew just how to put a corresponding pressure on the investigation, I'd do it. I somehow feel that I've trailed the whole thing down to its source, and then, like an overkeen dog, raced on past without knowing it. I may be wrong, but—Ricotti's is my place until something shows me that it isn't the place. I'm off there now," he continued as he looked at his watch. "It's almost noon. I wish you could go along, chief, but you're too well known, to go down there at this late stage of the game. Still, believing the way you do, you wouldn't think it worth while. But listen: pick up all the common dips and crooks in town, and go through them with a vacuum cleaner, and I don't believe you'd ever find a bit of that stuff."

"Have it your own way," growled the chief. "I almost hope you fall down on the case; that's all."

Fenger laughed. "He's high grade—you see I still stick to the theory that this is all the work of a single person—but sooner or later he'll overreach himself. Some time he'll go beyond strict business. Working in one place, and by himself, his personal feelings will crop out sometime, and then—we'll get him."

Half an hour later Fenger was seated at a table well back in Ricotti's. To all intents he idly watched the antics of the parrot in a cage on a pedestal to the right of the entry as one came in while he waited for his order to come, but in reality not a movement of those who passed in the doors escaped his notice.

Ricotti himself was sitting behind the cashier at her desk, which was to the left as one entered. His sharp eyes swept those who were at the tables, and more than once they rested on Fenger. That which Fenger had to do under cover, Ricotti did openly, though for another purpose, as becomes the proprietor of a cafe where hundreds, of every conceivable shade of wealth and character, dined each day.

During those hours when there were but few at the tables Ricotti spent much of his time in his private office, across the entry, and allowed the cashier, a clear eyed, night-crowned girl of his own race, to take care of matters; but at this hour he nearly always was at his post of vigil behind her. Famed as was the cookery and service of the place, the watchfulness of Ricotti matched these, and he who left without having paid his reckoning was entitled to boast of his feat.

The parrot shook out his feathers with a querulous scream and stretched out his head. He hooked his beak over a higher perch of his cage, released the one on which he sat, and dangled in mid-air, his talons clutching about in grotesque aimlessness. Fenger watched the bird reach out and grasp the wire bars of his prison and clamber to an inverted position in his direct line of vision.

At a table to the left sat a man who ate quickly, nervously—his feet drawn back to the sides of his chair and poised on the tips of his shoes—ready to jump back to his business at the earliest moment. At the next table lolled one who dabbed at this and pecked at that, manifestly possessed of all the time in the world, and determined not to spend it too quickly. Al-

most in line with the door sat one who nibbled appreciatively at the few sparing dishes he had ordered, who grudged every flavor that escaped him. One after another Fenger dismissed these from his surveillance as not being material to the matter he had in hand. When, however, he came to a table that stood between him and the cashier's desk, and next the wall, he gave the two men who were seated there a more direct scrutiny.

Both were men of the obviously successful business type. Before them on the table was spread an array of papers, which they consulted and compared as they talked in low tones. It was only when at last their order was brought that the elder of them looked up.

"Here comes our waiter, Jim," he remarked as he gathered up his papers and placed them in a capacious wallet, from which projected the edges of several yellow notes, and dropped them into his inside coat pocket. "By to-morrow, or the next day, I'll have it all arranged."

Fenger's order came at about the same time, and it was then that he became aware of the fact that Ricotti, too, had had an eye on the two men. But an instant later the other turned and scowled at a young fellow who in entering had spoken to the cashier. Fenger smiled as this one came on, and waved an inviting hand.

"Here, Cesare—" he pushed back a chair— "welcome once more to the sign of the green parrot."

"I know not that I am welcome," smiled the other broadly, "but I come, nevertheless."

"Not welcome! He who has an appetite and the price is always welcome here, isn't he?"

"Yes, provided he has eyes only for his plate—or the parrot."

"Ah!" Fenger looked over to find the cashier's black eyes resting on his companion. "Rosa, eh? She is a stunning cashier, to say the least."

"I have given her advice about Ricotti," volunteered Cesare, "for which he does not thank me. Perhaps you noticed."

"Ricotti?" Fenger did not understand.

Cesare shrugged. "Rosa is—eh!—desirable, shall we say? Ricotti would return to Italy at no far day, it is said. He does not wish to go alone."

"I see. But what have you against Ricotti?"

Cesare shrugged once more, and in a polite way the shrug spoke volumes of more than mere disapprobation. "Nothing—and much.... That parrot," he digressed, not at all keen to follow the lead he had provided, "is always hungry."

"Oh, yes, the parrot." Fenger transferred his gaze from Ricotti to the bird. "Yes, Ricotti seems awfully fond of the parrot."

The other laughed silently. "How else would he himself have built for the bird such a pedestal—look at it—and so high? But it is—too much for me. I do not understand."

Fenger considered the thing again. There was much of truth in what the other suggested. Projecting from the wall and well inside the doors, which were hinged inward on a central column, stood the panelled pedestal. Breast high in the three exposed sides of this were set three small mirrors, possibly eight inches square. This of itself would not have been out of the ordinary, except that their height from the floor was an unusual one; for, extending on each side of the pedestal and along the wall beyond which was Ricotti's private office, were two large mirrors, each at least eight feet by five feet in size, set at the usual height. Further, placed at about a third of the distance in from the left edge of the front one of the small mirrors in the pedestal, and reaching almost to the floor, was a polished vertical brass rod, clearing the pedestal by at least eight inches.

The pedestal itself rose to about a foot above the level of the head of an ordinary man. On the top of it was imposed an elaborate cage, and in this the green parrot dozed or screamed querulously, clambered or preened himself.

"There is no accounting for tastes, Cesare," Fenger remarked finally. "Some like this for a pet, some that. So long as Ricotti's fare pleases, what does it matter if—"

He stopped at the fierceness of the look that leaped into the other's face. Following his companion's gaze Fenger saw what was clearly the reason for it. Speaking to Rosa was one whom he had seen in this place before. The newcomer was still in his youth, well-built, and while there was a tinge of floridity in his features it was but a suggestion. He was well groomed, too, yet in spite of his smooth appearance, he was not good to look at.

The cashier, too, was of this opinion, if one could judge by the manner in which she drew away from the man before her. Little short of loathing was in her face, but open as was her expression of it, it seemed not to make itself felt upon him. His smile was half a leer as he leaned toward her. Cesare made an angry, involuntary movement, his hand in his coat pocket. Instinctively Fenger laid a restraining hand on the other's sleeve.

"The beast!" exclaimed Cesare. "I could kill him—gladly."

Ricotti it was who broke the tensity of the situation. Stepping out from behind Rosa he beckoned to a waiter.

"Albert—here. This gentleman wishes a table."

There was the flexible menace of a rapier blade in the tones; but only amused contempt showed itself in the smile of the other as he followed the waiter away.

Ricotti went back to his place. As if nothing had happened he resumed his seat and let his gaze run over the gathering diners. But for the added harshness in his eyes one would not have known that he had been touched by what had occurred.

The antagonistic spirit of Cesare, however, was more pronounced and open in its expression.

"The swine!" he said between clenched teeth as his eyes bored after the one who had given him offense.

Fenger said nothing. Presently Cesare turned to face him.

"Not enough is it that he hounds her—he must insult her openly with his loathsome attentions, this Cibrario," he gave in terse explanation as he met Fenger's look. "Do you know what he has done? Jailed her father on a false charge to break her spirit, and threatens more if she will not yield to his wishes." He fumbled again in his coat pocket. "But the time of reckoning comes. To-day the father is set free. Let Cibrario look out for himself after. I shall not touch him unless he offers her actual harm, but—Rosa's father will not be so charitable."

Cesare was poor company after that, and Fenger allowed him to continue his meal in silence.

Presently the two men at the wall table made ready to leave. Ricotti rose, and at first it seemed that he was coming forward to speak to them. Instead, he lounged across the entry and stopped below the parrot's cage. From his pocket he produced a small cracker, which he held tantalizingly near the bird. Its screams seemed to delight him, but finally he held the cracker near enough to be reached. A pair of strong mandibles seized upon it and jerked within the cage. Ricotti laughed and came away, but instead of returning to his lookout he followed the mirrored wall, turned its corner to the right, opened the door of his office, and entered.

In the meanwhile the two men whom Fenger had deemed it worth his while to keep watch over until they were clear of the doors had paid their bills and were preparing to leave. Fenger glanced from them to the parrot, which was making away with the cracker at a ravenous rate. Suddenly he sat up, all attention. For as he looked something white flitted down from the pedestal and fell at the feet of one of the men, the elder, who had just reached the door. The man stopped and picked it up.

"Well, now, see here," he laughed up at the bird, which was screaming down at him, "if you are as hungry as all that, it seems to me that you shouldn't be so reckless with your food."

He steadied himself with his left hand upon the brass rail that protected the mirror in the front of the pedestal, and reached the piece of cracker up to the cage. After allowing the parrot to make several futile attempts at it, he held it closer. Then he and his companion went out, still laughing, as the bird resumed its meal.

Fenger looked at his watch, called for his check, and also made ready to go. In the entry he halted a moment, waiting.

"That infernal parrot," he muttered to himself, not being able to keep his eyes off the bird. "He's getting on my nerves with a vengeance.... There was something wrong there a little while ago—by George, there was!—but what?"

Out of one of the doors on the opposite side of the street came a dapper young fellow, all energy. He came across, halted beside Fenger, and poised on first one foot and then the other as he stooped and slapped down the cuffs of his trousers.

"Any luck?" he asked out of the corner of his mouth.

"Nothing—that is, nothing sure. Two likely subjects, but no one went near them at any time. Get a table where you can watch the entry, and look out for jostling."

As the other straightened and went inside Fenger stepped out upon the pavement.

"I know how it would sound to Edwards," he cogitated, "but—well, I feel as if I had seen something happen that I hadn't seen happen."

He started away briskly on the trail of the two who had just left. When they parted he followed the one who had fed the parrot. As he went he pondered his problem. Of a sudden he struck his palm with his clenched fist, and his face cleared.

"By George!" he exclaimed as he came to a dead halt, "that's it! Too much cracker! But where did it come from?"

He just missed being bumped into by a palpably excited individual. He looked up. It was the man whom he had been trailing, and he was making back toward the cafe at a great pace. As he went he kept his eyes on the pavement, his hand in his inside coat pocket, searching in an inutile but persistent way.

Fenger reached out an impulsive hand to stop him, but as swiftly drew back. Instead he cut across the street and kept abreast of the other.

Straight into Ricotti's doorway the other threw himself. But that he had arrived at an inopportune time the next moment made plain. Cibrario, coming from the direction of his table toward the cashier's desk, had just cleared the inward-fastened doors when the other, bolting through, ran into him. It was a rather undignified and headlong gait for one of the excited man's obvious standing, of course, but anyone in his position would doubtless have done the same thing. The force of the collision nearly flung Cibrario off his feet. With a quick motion he regained his balance, and in the same second he dealt the other a flat-handed slap in the face.

There was instant commotion. And even as Fenger crossed the street at a run, wondering at the prolonged absence of Ricotti from the scene, a new factor entered, for someone sprang past him and toward the doors. The affronted one had forgotten his loss, and was menacing Cibrario, who slowly retreated toward the mirrored wall. But the thing that caught Fenger's eye was that Rosa had slipped down from her stool and now sprang out of her cage and threw herself upon the man who had just outdistanced him across the street.

"Father!—no!" she cried as she flung her arms about him. "No! No! Not here—not now!"

The man was no child in strength, nor was he gentle in his treatment of her, but in her desperation she hindered his progress somewhat. In the background Cesare came running, and Fenger saw that his hand was once more in his coat pocket and that his eyes were on Cibrario.

Fenger hurried forward to help Rosa hold the infuriated man to whom she clung, and then, when he had almost reached them, the man tore himself loose with a jerk that caused him to lose his balance. He had a blade in his hand, and, still whirling, he crashed against a corner of the pedestal, against which Cibrario had by this time backed. Cibrario started to turn upon him, a snarl upon his lips and another blade in his hand; but in that same instant in which the swing of his body began he threw back his head, his eyes flew wide in surprised terror, he vented a coughing gasp, and went forward to the floor, a quivering heap, and turned face up.

As he went down the parrot loosed an explosive, rasping laugh, and the man who stood just below threw up his arm to

ward off—he knew not what. It was clearly an instinctive motion of self-protection, and his elbow shot into the mirror on the street-ward side of the pedestal. When he saw what it was that had given him his fright he gave no heed to the tinkle of the shattered glass, but gave his attention to the fallen Cibrario.

For an instant Fenger gaped—fairly gaped—at the pedestal. Then he stepped into the corner and quickly placed himself in the angle against the broken mirror, and with one foot raked the broken bits of glass under him. He was just in time for at that instant he heard the door of the office slam, and Ricotti himself came running around the corner.

"What is it?" he cried excitedly, bursting into the crowd.

The young fellow who had taken up Fenger's vigil in the cafe had been kneeling over the prostrate form. Now he rose.

"He is dead," he announced.

"Dead?" echoed Ricotti, pushing farther in. "Who is dead? What—Cibrario! Who has done this?"

For the first time the father of Rosa seemed to realize his compromising position. He made toward the edge of the crowd, but was seized. To those who had not noticed him particularly at the time when Cibrario fell it must have seemed that he was the guilty man.

"Look for the wound," Fenger ordered.

The other turned the body of Cibrario on its side. Squarely in the middle of the back was a gaping cut which showed where the fatal wound had been struck. A crimson clot showed on the tessellated floor.

"That'll do," commented Fenger. "Step back out of the way, Bert."

With a quick gesture he circled one wrist with the fingers of the other hand, and then thrust his right hand into his armpit. The next second a blue-rimmed muzzle centered unwinkingly on Ricotti. Another second, and a pair of neat but serviceable bracelets clasped Ricotti's wrists securely at his back. Too late Ricotti roused from his momentary stupor of surprise, and wrenched and strained in unavailing fury in the assistant's grasp.

A passing car swerved and slid to the curb with an angry protest of brakes, and some one sprang in among those who by this time jammed the doors.

"Here! What's this mean?" cried the voice of the chief of police. "What's going on here? 'Way there—'way there!"

He came to an astonished halt as he caught sight of Fenger, who still held his place against the pedestal.

"Well, now, what the—!" he ejaculated.

"The personal factor, and the end of the trail—at the same time," said Fenger, nodding toward the form on the floor. "You happened along at a good time, chief. There's the man you've been looking for, —the man at the center of the web of red routes." He indicated Ricotti, who again broke into vituperation.

"He is a fool!" he fumed. "A fool of fools! He has no right to hold me. Was I not in my office when this thing happened? Any one here can tell you so. And he holds me, when there stands the murderer, caught with the weapon in his hand!"

"Look at the weapon, Ricotti," spoke up Fenger. "You, there—show it to him.... Now, what have you to say?"

Ricotti shrank back. The weapon Rosa's father had held was a slender stiletto, altogether incapable of having made the cut that gaped in the dead man's coat.

"The thing that killed Cibrario was a rather wide-bladed dagger," Fenger pursued, "and it was driven strong and true from the back, and squarely into the spine. That this other intended to do the thing there is small doubt, but that he actually did it won't go, Ricotti."

"If not he, who then? Did anyone see another strike at him? Tell me that."

Fenger shook his head slowly. Above him the parrot chattered raucously.

"Then why this insult!" raged Ricotti. "You will ruin my business. I will have the law on you."

"That'll do," snapped Fenger. "If you had stayed in your—office a moment longer, perhaps you would have seen the crash of your plans. Chief," he suggested, "if you'll have the place cleared—"

The crowd was finally locked on the outside and the doors shaded half way up.

"Now, if you'll excuse the melodramatics and step around to the opposite side of this pedestal, chief,"—he paused and waited for the other to take the indicated place—"and now, if you'll stoop and look into the little mirror on that side, and excuse the word-play—rather good place for reflections, isn't it, chief?"

"What's the idea?" rasped the other. "Why—what the devil!" he ejaculated, as Fenger stepped out of his corner.

As if by magic it seemed that the two remaining mirrors had been changed into two squares of plain glass, which could be seen through without hindrance. The inside of the pedestal showed a dead, dull black.

Upon the instant Ricotti loosed another flood of curses. Fenger picked up one of the largest of the pieces of glass and placed it upon the cuff of the chief's uniform. Every fiber of the cloth was plainly to be seen. He turned the glass over on its other side, and instantly the light was cut off from behind it, it became a perfect mirror.

"Well—I'll—be—" began the chief.

"I wouldn't, on that account," objected Fenger. "The answer is simple. It's platinized glass."

"Platinized glass?"

"Just that. The glass, as I remember the process, is coated with a very thin layer of a liquid charged with platinum, and then raised to a red heat. The platinum and the glass unite, but the glass doesn't lose any of its transparency so long as there is light on both sides of it. Place it where no light can get to the platinized side of it, and it's a mirror; otherwise, it's transparent. I remembered what I'd read about it the second that the shattered glass fell out of its frame. Wait a minute, and maybe I can show you how Ricotti made use of the peculiar property of this glass. I'll probably have to bother you for your keys, Ricotti."

The other struggled, but to no avail. Fenger took the keys and went around to the office door. This was not locked, but a closet inside required a key to open it. Inside the closet Fenger hunted about a bit before he found a second door set neatly into the wall. This opened upon the back of the pedestal. He fumbled about underneath a black, horizontal curtain, and just at the lower edge of the front mirror he found a catch on the inner side of the panelling.

"Now then," he requested, "if you'll come here and go through the actions of teasing that parrot with a cracker, I'll show you how the trick was done. Stand as you would naturally."

With his left hand upon the rail the chief reached up toward the cage with his right. The position drew up his coat so that the right side of it hung quite free of his body. Fenger tilted aside the panel, reached through, and deftly abstracted a sheaf of papers from the chief's pocket.

"Easy picking," he laughed. "The brass rod kept them from getting too close. This curtain shut off all the light from below quite effectively. He could see out, but no one in."

He drew his flashlight and looked overhead. "I thought as much," he said. "It struck me after I had left here a bit ago that, considering how much time that the parrot had had to eat, there was too much cracker fell to the floor. You see, if he thought you worth while he coaxed you to feed the parrot by pushing a piece of cracker through this slot just below the cage. If you fell for it and picked up the cracker and fed the parrot, you paid the price. Behind this glass he was safe."

He backed out and came into the main room again. "Ricotti," he remarked. "I almost admire you. You've got brains. You played a keen game; you played it alone; you went after good money in a fairly public place. You won out for a time. But the trouble with you, just as with the rest of the crooks, is that you finally mixed personal matters with those of your crook business. All of you do, eventually, but—it's an explosive mixture."

He followed Ricotti's lowering glare and saw Cesare and Rosa drawing irresistibly nearer each other.

"I say, chief," he suggested, "there's a safe in the office that might bear looking into. Let's try it. We'll take Ricotti along. He might be of some use there."

SPRINGS ETERNAL

By WEARE HOLBROOK

Without its sulphur springs to draw patronage, the Gath Hotel has ceased to be a popular resort and is merely an obstacle in the path of municipal expansion. Its passing is a tragedy to the proprietor which is not softened by subsequent "improvements."

THE jaundiced leaves of the Gath Hotel register flaunted a list of names that might have brought money at auction. But flaunted is not the word, for they were covered with the dust of neglect and the tracks of flies that buzzed their brief lives away while our fathers were learning the alphabet.

The list ended abruptly. There was no one to write *Finis* after it except Steffin Gath, and he refused. He refused to sell the hotel, which caused small grief in the world, for few wanted to buy it. He refused to tear it down, which didn't much matter, for in the course of time it would fall down.

Already the falling process had commenced. Those windows of wonderful curved glass in the four towers—glass imported from France, they say—had been smashed by certain young ruffians who passed along the country road. A high wall kept hoi polloi from trespassing upon the courts and terraces of the Gath Hotel, and the grim iron gates that formerly stood ajar at a hospitable angle for the elect, were now locked. If the elect would not enter, none else should, and Steffin Gath himself had turned the key.

The good people of the countryside resented this (no mortal is so sensitive as your supposedly thick-skinned rustic), and when a lad was able to throw a stone from the road and hit one of the windows in the Gath establishment—particularly one in a tower—he was rather applauded by his elders.

They had no sympathy for Steffin Gath because it was apparent that he did not desire their sympathy. They knew that he was in the depths of poverty, and suffering, and they would at least have taken a morbid interest in his troubles had he given them an opportunity.

But he had not mixed with them in the days of his prosperity, and adversity had made him even less approachable. When the hotel was at the height of its glory, and the internationally famous sulphur springs chortled gleefully in the garden, he had associated with his guests with the polite familiarity of a host. Convalescent capitalists, dyspeptic millionaires, gouty governors and now and then an over-banqueted foreign notable had hovered about the springs—at so much per hover—like moths about a flame. Then one day, one horrible, unforgettable day, the springs suddenly and unaccountably ceased to flow. The guests departed and with them, wealth. Each morning the bus set out hopefully for Charlotte, the nearest railroad point. Each evening it returned empty, and after a few weeks, gave up the game, The Gath Hotel had lost its sole attraction; though it was spacious and luxurious, there was nothing in the bleak country surrounding it that offered any excuse for a sojourn there. At that time cities were none too numerous in the locality; there was no premium on fresh air, and no one thought of cultivating a rural atmosphere.

In the years that followed, Steffin Gath associated only with himself, and as a natural result, became "queer." It seems that in order to keep our mental balance we must have a few individuals about us to act as props, prods and buffers. Steffin Gath had none. When a stone from the vulgar world without crashed through the window of his room, he merely cursed in a gentlemanly fashion, and moved to

another room. There were plenty of rooms. The hotel with its rambling verandas covered several acres. It was the last of the Gath fortunes and Steffin was the last of the Gath line.

When the eaves of the verandas began to bend and sag, Steffin Gath, who had always borne himself as a proud man should, began to bend and sag too. When the verandas themselves yielded here and there to the gentle force of gravity, Steffin Gath drooped still more. As the sun and rain faded the gorgeous pillars and facades, Steffin Gath's hair whitened. It seemed to be a race between the mansion and the man—a race of disintegration.

A sign of his "queerness" was the fact that the sudden sounds which once startled him horribly, presently startled him not at all. He used to jump at the sound of a falling slate in the night, or the slamming of a wind-blown door; the echoes of his footsteps in the long, empty corridors would make him glance over his shoulder involuntarily, the clatter of the blinds would keep him awake until dawn.

In time he came to recognize the customary noises, and ceased to wonder at the new ones, though they grew more numerous. The gold leaf flaked from the ornate picture frames in the lobby. The pictures themselves cracked and blistered as if suffering from some loathsome disease—a disease that eventually attacked all of the handsomely veneered woodwork.

The red tile floor in what Steffin had been pleased to call his ancient Gothic dining hall, had long since ceased to respond in crisp staccato to the heels of hurrying waiters; dust and grime had muffled it until it gave out a scarcely audible crunch when Steffin walked among the huddled chairs and tables.

Somehow Steffin Gath lived. To go to Charlotte for provisions was an impossibility, though one that was mental rather than physical. In the first place, it involved selling something in order to get money. Then there would be the trip to the village, the staring yokels and the quibbling tradesmen. The idea was unthinkable. He would almost prefer starvation. The hotel had always kept its buffet well-stocked, and after Steffin had ransacked the storeroom of all the comestibles that suited his palate, he would descend to the cellar.

In the years that followed, he was never quite sober, although never hilariously drunk. And so his future resolved itself into a matter of bed-rooms and bottles.

CHARLOTTE was growing. If the world didn't appreciate the fact, the fault was not A. J. Heisman's. A. J. Heisman was chairman of the city council, president of the Charlotte Realty and Investment Company, and, as consumate proof of his loyalty, had named his only daughter after the city in which he dwelt.

It was in the role of president of the Charlotte Realty and Investment Company that he pulled up in front of the gates of the Gath Hotel one bright October morning, and requested admittance. "Requested admittance" is a polite way of saying that having tethered his nag to the nearest tree, A. J. endeavored to attract the attention of Steffin Gath by a series of stentorian bellows which might have been translated as, "Oh, Mr. Gath!" "I say, come out!" "Open up!" "Halloo!" "Mr. Gath!" "Hey there, you!" "Gath!"

Finding that his shouts brought him nothing but perspiration, he scouted along the high brick wall until he found a niche ample enough to hold the toe of his broad boot. Then, pushing his derby firmly down to his ears, A. J. Heisman swung his portly person to the top of the wall, rolled over upon a stomach especially designed for rolling, and fell off on the other side, triumph and apoplexy written upon his countenance.

Once inside, he did not dally, did not even stop to brush the dust from his trousers, but ploughed over a hedge of weeds where a few broken stones suggested there had once been a sidewalk.

As he strode up the hotel steps, settled at varying angles, Mr. Heisman laid a heavy hand on the rococo banister and it stirred at his touch like a living thing.

The huge door of patterned oak was not latched; he seized its green brass knob and pushed it open. No use to knock or

call. To gain Steffin's notice he must meet him face to face. Quite likely the old gentleman was deaf by this time. Perhaps he was dead. That idea had never before struck A. J. Steffin Gath might have had a stroke of some kind, dying in one of the spidery corners of the old hostelry like a rat in a wall. As this thought occurred to A. J., he paused and lit a cheroot, humming "S'kommt ein Vogel geflogen" rather louder than was necessary, considering the size of his audience.

He was surprised to see that the lobby was in perfect order, as if it had been gone over by a feminine hand that very morning. The broad expanse of hardwood floor bisected by a long, faded rug, was cleaner than most hotel floors. Only the high ceiling showed neglect; the plastering had cracked precariously, and the prism-spangled chandelier was draped with dirty cobwebs.

On the marble-topped desk lay a large brazen gong. A. J. struck it in passing, and it rang clear, but the echo seemed stifled by the very gloom of the place.

The stairway was abominably dark. He stopped at the first landing and pulled mightily at his cheroot which gave a sly wink of illumination and enabled him to guess where his next step would lead. At the same time he heard a slow, shuffling tread on the floor above. Somebody was evidently coming down the stairway. A. J. retreated to the lobby. Accused of fear, he would have been angry; but the stairway was a poor place to meet anyone.

The person above had evidently come to the same conclusion, for the steps hesitated and then returned to the second floor.

A stalemate followed. It was finally broken by creaking as a body leaned far out over the balustrade, and a hoarse voice rattled:

"You—you are that Mr. Peters from Vermont?"

"No, I am Mr. Heisman of Charlotte."

"You are Mr. Peters—Ex-Congressman Peters."

"I am Heisman. You know—A. J."

"Let me get a better look at you, Mr. Peters."

There was a shuffle as if several men were coming down the stairs, and presently Steffin Gath descended from the shadow and supported himself against the newel.

He was clad in wrinkled and obsolete evening dress, sans shirt or collar, and a stained lavender dressing-gown hung from his thin shoulders. A white beard accentuated the hue of his gaunt, plum-colored face; his watery eyes peered with difficulty from beneath their lids, and his mouth hung open, a quivering cavern in the beard.

A moment's silence followed as the two regarded each other. Then Steffin Gath remarked:

"You've grown heavier, Mr. Peters."

"My name's Heisman," corrected A. J., smiling and extending his hand. Steffin enclosed it in a feverish grasp and smiled, too, but the smile was not pleasant to see.

"How do you do? But your name is Peters. Don't you remember? Ex-Congressman Peters from Vermont. When you were here in 'eighty-two you promised to send me something. I can't remember what it was, but you never did."

"My name isn't Peters, though."

"Ah, but it is," the old man politely insisted. "Of course it is, if you'd only stop to think. The idea of your not being Peters. It's absurd. Oh dear, it *is* absurd." And he laughed in a wild falsetto that made A. J. uncomfortable. The latter decided that he had better humor his host and become Peters pro tem.

"Yes," he admitted, with the air of one having just committed a solemn bit of roguery, "I am Peters. I am merely representing Mr. Heisman in a little transaction. Mr. Heisman is president of the Charlotte Realty and Investment Company which—"

"But you *are* Peters," assured Steffin with childlike earnestness.

"Oh, yes. Of course," A. J. agreed a trifle wearily. He was anxious to get down to business.

"I remember you very well. You stopped here in 'eighty-two and you always said—you always said that when you got back to Vermont you would send something. Perhaps you recall what it was."

The old man blinked at him expectantly.

A playful idea struck the chairman of the city council.

"Yes, I recall distinctly," he said, producing a folded map from his pocket. "I've brought it with me. You see this plat shows our plans. All this section will be cut up into town lots. There's the county road that runs right past here, and that's what is going to be Heisman street. When things get pretty well built up, we're going to start a big amusement and recreation park—the button companies have promised to co-operate—and there will be six miles of electric car-line. Now, you see, Mr. Gath, our idea is to extend Charlotte, and as it involves you, I thought you'd be interested."

"Yes indeed," assented Steffin, with mild concern. "Charlotte who?"

A. J. cast his eyes to the cobwebbed ceiling and sighed.

"The city of Charlotte, the city of Charlotte," he explained. "The factories are bringing more people there all the time. It's over-crowded. And the value of this property is increasing daily, although you can realize nothing on it in its present state. Now what I propose, is this. Sell your hotel and grounds to the Charlotte Realty Company. They will give you ten thousand dollars and two hundred shares in the Charlotte Addition Corporation, which practically means thirty thousand dollars."

"Thirty thousand," murmured Steffin dreamily. "The hotel alone cost more than that, I believe."

"But it isn't worth anything, now," objected A. J. "I leave it to anybody if it is. Your fortune lies in the land, Mr. Gath."

"Ah, but the land isn't what is was." Steffin was suddenly sad. "You have been misinformed, Mr. Peters. Come, I must show you."

He moved uncertainly to a cloudy window and rubbed it with his sleeve; his movements were spasmodic, like those of a puppet dangled by an unskilled manipulator.

"You see?"

With a quivering gesture he indicated the garden where dead leaves danced about in a rocky basin.

"Why, that's all right," A. J. assured him. "The Realty Company will clear all that away. They expect to make improvements; they've got unlimited capital—"

"But the springs, the sulphur springs. You know—they dried up." Steffin spoke as if the catastrophe had occurred yesterday.

"Oh, the springs don't matter. We don't want the springs." A. J. was generous. "Come, we'll accept things just as they are. Here's a check for ten thousand and here's shares to the value of twenty."

"I hate to sell," Steffin demurred. "I've been sort of waiting around for the springs to commence running again. They might start some night, you can't tell. I go out every morning to look, and last week I thought I saw moisture."

A. J. dismissed the idea.

"Sulphur springs ain't worth much now, Mr. Gath. You'd never make a go of the hotel again."

"Oh, but these springs were wonderful. They were equal to any in Europe. You said yourself that they were what cured your rheumatism."

"Me?" demanded A. J. incredulously.

"Yes, when you were here in 'eighty-two. That was why you were going to send me something, but I—I can't remember what."

"Yes, yes," agreed Mr. Heisman, taking his cue hastily, "but they're out of date in these times. A lot of them's just fakes. The scientists have found out that most sulphur springs don't do any more good than well-water. Now, about this stock—"

"Just a moment, Mr. Peters," Steffin Gath was shivering. "Please be seated and make yourself as comfortable as you can. I—I haven't breakfasted yet. Feel a bit weak. We can discuss matters while I eat."

He tottered around the desk and brought forth a bottle and a large tin box.

"Perhaps you will join me," he invited. "It's only brandy and water-crackers."

"Is *that* all you have for breakfast?" inquired his guest bluntly.

"It's all I have for dinner. In fact, it's all I have. It's enough. I switched to gin a while ago, but gin is hard on the eyes. Brandy is best."

"My God!" ejaculated A. J. the well-fed, in unstifled amazement.

It was not until late that afternoon that the deal was closed and Heisman cast aside the mask of Peters with much relief. As he mounted the high brick wall for the second time that day, a wild figure in a lavender dressing-gown staggered out on the porch of the Gath Hotel, and called "Petersh."

A. J. grunted, descended heavily, and retraced his steps. To a pillar clung Steffin, as if it were the mast of a careening brig. He had dined heartily in his own wet way.

"Petersh—I mean Mr. Petersh. Don't forget the maple sugar."

"Maple sugar?"

"Maple sugar," Steffin affirmed. "Just 'curred to me that's what you promise send me when you got back V'mont. You know—in 'eighty-two."

"Oh, sure," agreed A. J. wearily. "Give me the key to them gates and I'll send you lots of sugar."

"Oh, sure," Steffin repeated like an old parrot. "Oh, sugar—oh, sure. Here all m' keys. I'll 'vacuate the place whenever you say so." He tossed a jingling leather bag to Mr. Heisman. "Oh, sure. Best of fren's, Petersh. Best of fren's."

When Mr. Heisman left the Gath Hotel, it was, as we have said before, with great relief. It had required no little engineering to keep the old man's brandy-soaked mind upon the business at hand. Time after time it would wander away to the springs and the sparkling seventies; time after time Mr. Heisman would drag it back to Charlotte Addition.

But the affair was settled, and A. J. possessed the Gath property. Within the week Steffin sold his Charlotte Addition stock for almost nothing, and departed. He went to St. Louis, contracted delirium tremens, and died in an asylum, so the people of Charlotte said. They had seen a man of three-score-and-ten, very drunk, board the St. Louis train, and had inferred the rest. How far they were wrong in their inference, we shall see.

It was the end of the line. As the conductor reversed the trolley, the lights winked coquettishly in the Charlotte Addition owl car. (Yes, Charlotte was metropolitan enough to own an owl car. Six years can work wonders). Crank in hand, the motorman walked to the other end with the eagerness that comes only at the last trip.

Steffin Gath was the sole passenger, and he seemed to slumber. The motorman poked him in the ribs gently.

"Hey," he said. "We're goin' to the barns, now, old man."

Steffin, without replying, and scarcely opening his eyes, felt his way out of the car to the spongey gravel below. The motorman added one more fact to his collection. "That," he remarked, "is the oldest bum I ever seen."

Why Steffin had come out to Charlotte Addition at this hour was not obvious. His pockets contained the price of a night's lodging, but there were no hotels in the Addition. It was exclusively a residence section; the residents emphasized the word "exclusively."

He had money, but he also had a fever, and the cool summer darkness felt better to him than the air of a lodging-house.

The car hummed away to its barns and left him standing on the county road. Mechanically he turned and took the narrow, weed-choked sidewalk.

True, it was the old county road. No doubt about it. But how much changed! Wasn't that the lane that led to Gridwell's dairy farm where the Gath Hotel once got butter and eggs? No, it was only an alley leading to someone's garage. Wasn't that the District-Number-Nine schoolhouse? No, it was merely one of Jones's Famous Thousand-Dollar Bungalows. The moonlight held no illusions.

Wasn't that the bent elm-tree that stood in front of the hotel, the "scoopey" elm the children used to run up and teeter on? It was, surely. Steffin stared where once had stood the house of Gath. No high brick wall, no forbidding gate, but a neatly-

terraced lawn met his eye, and a wooden arch bore the faintly poetic title:

"TERMINAL PARK—WELCOME."

Disregarding the orderly, sanded paths, he trudged through the park to the point where his old home must have stood. Its demolition had begun before he left, and now no trace of it remained. In place of the columns and turrets of Victorian grandeur was a primly symmetrical little band-stand.

The garden—Steffin, his head throbbing, pondered a moment—the garden had been behind the house. So it must be a little further on.

Dreading the sights that he knew he would not see, he hurried to the outskirts of the park. There, where the grounds were not so well-kept, he found scrubby remnants of a hedge that he, with his love of things English, had planted years ago.

And there was, undeniably, the garden—a jumble of weeds, an over-turned stone bench, a mendacious sun dial. There, surrounded by heaps of trash and offal, was the very willow under which he and Senator Colby had discussed sciatica and the annexation of Nova Scotia. There was the rookery to which no rooks had ever come, and there—Steffin's heart leaped—were the blanched rocks that had once cradled his famous sulphur springs.

He drew nearer and leaned over and touched them. Yes, they were real.

The fire-flies winked among the brambles, crickets chirped in varying cadence, and Steffin thought he could hear the sound of moving water, but perhaps it was only the wind in the willow. How many times he had listened vainly in that same spot for some reassuring burble from the depths. To-night he was certain that he heard a faint suggestion of it. His throat was dry; it rasped as he swallowed. A little of the spring—that clear, cold, bittersweet water—and he would be satisfied.

Laughing against his own hope, he put his hand forth slowly, with hesitation, into the shadow, and drew it back again. It was wet. Once more the springs were flowing. With a mad, inhuman cry he sprawled upon the rocks and, like an animal, drank.

Next morning Mayor Heisman's telephone rang.

"The coroner said 'natural causes,'"—it was the park commissioner speaking—"Old man. Nobody knows him. And by the way, I wish *you'd* speak to the waterworks, Mr. Heisman. What I say doesn't seem to do any good. That main back of the Terminal Park is leakin' again."

Next month: A PHILISTINE IN ARCADY *by Elliot Field.* From being a nebula of higher culture, harmless if not especially nourishing, the Arcadian Literary Fellowship slips to a lower intellectual level and begins to lose some of its innocence. J. Vincent Lafarge, Ph.D., who underwrites his more cultured pursuits by conducting a real estate business, is so much in danger of having his affections trifled with that his wife, who is not of the literary elite, feels the necessity of taking up the study of Homeric poetry.

PAINTED MARY

By F. A. DISLEIGH

In her grouchy old boss, who reads Marcus Aurelius to keep himself from getting cheerful, a stenographer encounters frankness which she at first resents but later blesses.

R. William Pender, Bill the Grouch, was manager, head and brains of the Acme Service, purveyors, wholesale and retail, of poetry, pictures, news, literature and all other kinds of editorial merchandise to the newspaper trade in general and particular.

Word went round the office this morning that he was worse than usual. He called to his desk in the big general room, Miss Mary O'Leary, stenographer.

"Robinson, Latimer and Co., Gazette, Toloosa, Ark.," he began, rapidly dictating. "In response to yours of the 14th., concerning our proposition: *Don't look up, Miss O'Leary, I'm about to say something to you very seriously.*"

He said these last words in the regular monotone of dictating.

"Don't feel insulted, either," he continued, looking intently at the letter from Toloosa, Ark. *"I'm going to talk to you for your good.* The rate per instalment for Secrets of an Actress's Boudoir—"

Mary was aware of some one standing near them.

"What is it, Mr. Alston? Can't I dictate without— Yes, yes. Do it. Don't disturb me again. Go on, Miss O'Leary. The Actress's Boudoir is one of the best circulation getters on the market. *Why have you taken to painting your face, carmining your lips, dying your hair and wearing such flashy clothes? You're making a show of yourself. Keep your head down. Take this as dictation.*"

The girl's eyes were blazing, her heart surged with anger, but she kept making marks in her book.

"Up to a month ago you were a nice little woman," he continued in the same even voice. *"Since then you've gradually become a painted—"*

Mr. Pender did not use the word he had in mind. Instead, he said, *"—horror. I knew a woman who began like you and I can't tell you how she ended.* The Actress's Boudoir jacked up the circulation of the Springville Banner over 600 in two months."

Mary knew there must be somebody passing.

"When you go home, look at yourself in the glass," this marvelous business letter went on. *"Stop it. Men despise a painted woman. Be a nice girl as you were.* Regretting that we can not change our first proposition, we are yours &c."

Then in a low voice, but still dictating: *"Tear up your notes. Do as I tell you."*

The girl deserved every word. She looked a shame and a reproach. Yet, she knew and Mr. Pender knew she was innocent, as modest as a nun—outwardly, unspeakable; inwardly, Sister Simplicitie.

Two months before she had heard Sarah Kenneth, an office woman, much older than herself, mourn on her death bed for a long, empty, desolate existence.

"Look at me, Mary," she cried. "Look at me! I am going to die. Don't live as I have lived. Get a husband! Get a home! Get children! I am dying and no one in the world cares!"

Mary smoothed her pillow as the passing life murmured to itself, inaudibly, then suddenly breaking forth:

"You are living the same life, Mary. Stop! Don't be like me. Marry anybody. You will be better off even in poverty if you have children and love about you. Get married! Don't die like me."

When Mary reached home after the funeral, she cried, for self-pity, half the night. Her empty days rose before her. It was time to follow the advice given her almost from the grave. She would get a husband, apply herself to acquiring matrimony as she had acquired shorthand and double-entry bookkeeping.

Alas! the few men she met were wild, shy flyers, not to be caught easily.

Stella, the manicure girl, advised the paint and powder.

"There's one trouble with all you office girls," she said. "You have no style—no style, no men."

"Office girls marry by hundreds and thousands," said Mary.

"Oh! I don't mean kids. Of course, children go up against marriage because they don't know. I mean girls like you and me that ain't kids no more. Believe me, to get men, us girls need style."

Mary intimated she would be glad to take a course in style.

"Leave it to me!" cried Stella. "You're too pale to start with. You need a little color in your face. We've got to be dashy, you know!"

Mary tried the faintest touch of pink on her cheeks—oh! just a touch. Rouge is like opium, the dose grows larger and larger. Mary began with a tint, and ended with a daub.

"Now you look fine," said the Lady of the File. "You need something to set off that color. Get your eyebrows fixed. Then we'll tackle the hair."

Thus you see how Mary went the downward path till she was brought up short by Mr. Pender dictating that letter you have just heard.

At home, Mary *did* look in the glass. She saw herself as grouchy old Bill saw her, as she now knew men saw her. She shuddered. In a rage against herself, but more against Bill, she scrubbed the paint off her cheeks.

"Men despise a painted woman!"

How dared he say that to her! The words burned into her soul. How she hated him.

"I don't blame his wife for leaving him!"

Mary did not know whether his wife had left him or not, did not know whether he had a wife. That was office gossip. To men and girls, Pender was a mystery—about thirty-six, bearded, without a friend, never courteous, hardly polite, uncouth, gruff; had made girls cry with his acrid tongue; yet they all knew he had a soft heart, for he had sent more than one girl home in a taxi at his own expense and scolded her roundly at the same time for not taking care of her health. Sometimes he drank and showed it. Romantic stenographers said he was drowning a secret sorrow—the desertion by his beautiful wife.

Always he had a little volume of Marcus Aurelius on his desk. When more than ever gloomy the girls could see him read a bit, opening at any page. Frequently he flung the book down with a curse; sometimes he smiled a grim smile, and patted the book as though he said:

"Right you are, Marcus; it's a hard game, but we'll have to play it out."

Mary appeared in the office next morning in an old time suit, not at all "dashy." There was no paint on her cheeks. Bill seemed not to notice. He read Marcus that day with some satisfaction.

"You're right, M. Aurelius," he said to himself. "She will never forgive me, but she's good and she will come out all right. Not like—"

He threw the book down. The woman who began like Mary, rose before him.

As the dye faded out of hair and eyebrows, Mary became her old self. She had concluded that matrimony could not be acquired; it had to happen.

Bill moved into a private office, made Mary his secretary and started her on her new duties with a new scolding. He found a cheap novel on her desk and threw it down in disgust.

"Why do you read such stuff?" he asked. "Don't you know it is trash?"

The girl made no answer.

"Tell me, don't you know this is trash?"

"I suppose it is," she murmured.

"Then why do you read it?" he continued. "Get good books and learn something. Don't let me see any more of this stuff on your desk."

How she hated him. If she could only afford to throw up her place and leave the office.

Next day he gave her two of the small volumes of Green's History of the English People.

"Read these," he growled at her. "Report to me on them. Don't say you like them if you don't. After the trash you have been reading they may come hard at first, but keep on and you will never read piffle again."

To her surprise Mary did like this "heavy" reading. Bill brought her the rest of the set, volume by volume. Not only that, he explained things to her, illuminated the text with little stories.

Life assumed a new interest for each. Bill took her education in hand, taught her what literature and poetry meant. Mary forgot her hate.

The office noticed this friendship. Gossip waxed without either knowing. The wise woman interfered.

"Look out for the boss," she said. "You know he has a wife? Sure he has. I don't know what he did to her, but they don't live together. Some of the stories they tell of what he drove her to are awful. Don't get too friendly with him, that's my advice."

This had the opposite effect of its intent. Whatever the trouble, Mary felt it was not Bill's fault. When he had shaken her soul with that paint and powder letter, she knew now, he had meant well—had meant to save her. He had saved her. How could he have been otherwise than good to his wife?

So the girl came to worship him—not with the love of a woman for a man, but with the affection of a foster sister, with the fidelity of a faithful follower who asks only to serve and sacrifice.

Getting his mail ready, Mary accidentally opened a personal letter. It was dated from Jefferson Market Jail, addressed to "Dear Bill" and signed "Irene." She put it back in the envelope at once, too loyal even to try to know. Irene must be the wife, she thought, the reason for the gnarled life he was leading. "Opened by mistake, unread. M. O'L.," she marked it.

Bill sat staring for many minutes after he read that letter.

"Take a note, Miss O'Leary."

Mary was surprised. He was a stickler for courtesy in his correspondence and would not think of dictating a personal note.

"'Irene De Mott, Jefferson Market Jail: Your friends say a good sucker never squeals. I'm past squealing, but also I'm past being a victim. Your day with Bill is over. Nothing doing.' Sign my name on the typewriter and send it."

Mary could understand that for his own reasons Bill might never permit the woman to re-enter his life; to refuse help was not in his character. She took a chance.

"You don't wish me to type that, Mr. Pender, do you?"

"Why not?"

"It sounds very cruel."

"I wish it to be cruel. Type it."

Mary hesitated.

"I don't think you wish to be cruel, Mr. Pender."

"Don't I? Here, read it. It's from my wife. Learn the sweet, calm, pleasant background there is to my life. Read it! Read it!"

He pushed the letter at her, the utmost bitterness in his voice.

"That's the woman I loved. I won't offend your ears by telling you what she is now. Every time she is in trouble she yells to me for help—the woman who spat on me. Read it!"

The girl never dreamed he could be like this. She was too agitated to take the letter.

"Shall I read it for you?" he cried. "Maybe I can accent it properly."

"Oh! No! No!"

"Then read it," and he pushed it at her again. She could not bring her eyes to the paper.

"I wish you to read it," he said savagely. Mary tried again, kept her eyes on the lines and made out something about the writer being deserted by all the world, being at the end of everything, and would Bill help her once more? The girl saw no word clearly for the tears were streaming down her cheeks.

"Crying? Crying for her?" Bill said as he snatched the letter back. "Crying for her? Ha! Ha! Cry for me! I have had my life broken by her, my faith in woman and man destroyed by her, my soul ruined by her; and you cry for her! I have tried to raise her up, not once, but often, and she laughed at me, is still laughing at me. She'll laugh at me again if I help her now. Crying for her? Cry for me!"

He tore up the letter and threw it away. Mary dried her tears and waited. He turned to his desk.

"Why not help her, Mr. Pender? What harm if she does laugh? Do it for yourself."

He looked at her with strange eyes.

"You think after all a man has suffered, after all a man has suffered, after all a woman has made a man suffer, he should still stand by her?"

"I think a man like you should."

Bill said nothing. Mary went to her desk. There was no speech in the room for half an hour. He ordered her to call up a certain number. She heard him talk to his lawyer.

"Get her out, get her out!" he said in a dreary, tired voice. "Don't mix me in it. Fix her up and let me have your bill. Keep her away from me. Do just as the last time; give her a fresh start. It won't do any good, but do it."

Mary would have liked to tell him what she thought, but decided it was time for silence, so there was no more talk between them that day.

This episode had a bad effect. A few days later Mary knew he was drinking. There was no change in dress or manner, but he did not speak, drew entirely within his shell, did not read Marcus Aurelius, and sometimes kept up his unseeing stare for ten or fifteen minutes.

Cleaning his desk, she came upon a half emptied flask of whiskey. When he sat down, she went to him with it in her hand.

"I found this in your desk," she said very simply. "Shall I throw it out?"

"You are a very presumptious young woman!" he cried as he took it from her, roughly. "Go to your place."

Mary became aware, without knowing why, that for all his words, he was ashamed, also afraid of her.

"Do what I tell you," he growled.

"I know you would like me to throw out that flask," she said without moving.

He looked at her, amazed.

"Why don't you obey me? Why do you dare talk like that?"

An inspiration came. She smiled down at him.

"I think this is revenge," she said.

"Revenge?" He was puzzled.

"You once dared to talk to me on a personal matter," she said. "I was very angry —but—you saved me from being very foolish and I have been thankful ever since. You see it must be revenge."

The thunder cloud on his face broke up, he laughed.

"Here, throw it out."

Late that afternoon he called her over.

"You have rendered me a great service," he said. "I shall never forget it."

"Not at all," said Mary. "I owed it to you. Now, I hope you can read your little book again." She pointed to the volume on his desk.

"Oh, damn Marcus Aurelius!" he cried as he seized her hand and clasped it. "You have done more for me in the last few days than Marcus did in years. You have given me back some of my faith."

In her room that night, Mary cried. She was delightfully unhappy.

The great danger came some weeks later. After office hours, leaving Bill at work on a problem, Mary passed out of the main door and saw a woman, painted, powdered, flaunting—a replica of Mary herself when Bill seared her soul with that dictation. An attendant whispered.

"She wants to see Mr. Pender. Says she's a particular friend."

Mary knew at once.

"Mr. Pender has gone home."

The woman swayed and grasped the girl's arm. Her hand was hot and fevered.

"I guess I'm all in," the woman gasped. "You work for him?"

Mary nodded.

"I'm his wife. I got to find him."

She tightened her grip on the girl's arm.

"Say, tell me where I can find him. I'm

all in. I'm hungry and I haven't any place to go."

She was on the edge of collapse. If Mary abandoned her the attendant would call an ambulance. Before it arrived Bill might come out.

"Come with me. I'll get you something to eat."

"You said it, little sport!" the woman cried. The attendant had to help her to the street. Mary called a taxi and whispered an address on Brooklyn Heights.

Irene toppled into her seat. As they swung across Brooklyn Bridge she sat up and gazed at the river.

"Say, where the hell are you taking me?" she cried. "Is this a job?"

"No, it's all right. I'll get you a good hot meal."

When the taxi had driven away from before Mary's house, the woman looked up, suspicious, then laughed again—that laugh more hopeless than a sob.

"Oh! well, go as far as you like. I can't kick. Play the hand out."

In Mary's room she fell on the couch. The girl put her in her own bed and brought her tea. She was very weak, had to be propped up on the pillows.

"Tea!" she sneered. "Get me a real drink. That stuff is no good."

Mary prevailed on her to take it—gave it, herself, to the awful woman, spoonful by spoonful, helped her get off her clothes, tucked her under the coverlet.

"Say, I don't know why you're doing this but you're all right, all right."

Irene slept. Mary wondered what was to be done next. Morning answered. The woman was very ill. A doctor advised removal to a hospital—she might be a burden for a long time.

"I will think it over," said the girl. "It may not be for the best."

That day in the office Bill was in great spirits. With the return of his faith in woman he seemed to have broken out of his old chrysalis.

In the evening, when Mary reached home, it was evident there would be no recovery. The doctor counselled sending for the woman's relatives.

"What did he say?" asked Irene. "Am I a dead one? I knew it was coming. I'm not sorry, at that."

She rolled over and gazed at the wall. After a few minutes she turned and looked intently at Mary with her glaring, feverish eyes.

"Why are you taking care of me?" she asked. "I don't know you and you don't know me. Trying to keep me from him, ain't you?"

The girl soothed her, evaded her glance. Irene guessed the truth, but was far from Mary's motive.

"How long did that doctor say I had?"

"It's nothing like that. He said you were quite ill and might like to see your relatives."

"As bad as that? Relatives?" She tried to laugh again. "My relatives don't want to see me and I don't want to see them. Better send me away and let me pass out all by myself."

Mary could not let the woman die alone, unforgiven. The next morning she stood by Bill's desk, striving hard to hold herself calm.

"Mr. Pender," she began, "I'm afraid I am going to shock you."

"Shock away! I'm a tough old bird," he said. "Do your worst."

"I have met your wife."

"What?" He turned in his chair, all the smile gone out of his face. "When? Where?"

"Here at the office."

He shrivelled up, looked at her hopelessly, could hardly bring himself to ask:

"What did she want?"

"She was very ill. She—"

"The old story. Not a cent!" he cried. "Not a cent! She will torture me into my grave. She is not ill. It is one of her tricks."

"Mr. Pender, she is dying. I have her home in my rooms."

"You took her into your home? Do you know what she is?"

"You were not here, Mr. Pender. I thought you would be glad if some one took care of her."

"You did that for me? And now? And now?"

"Wouldn't you like to go and see her.

She can not live very long. Maybe you could forgive her before she dies."

He could only murmur:

"She took her in! She took her in!"

Mary waited and then:

"Shall I say you will see her?"

"Did she tell you to ask this?"

"No, but I think she would die happier if you forgave her. Your own life would be the happier."

Bill put his arms on the desk and bowed his head. Mary went to her place where she could hear him half whisper to himself, "Dying! Dying!"

Suddenly, he stood up and said, "Take me to her. Now."

What passed between them Mary never knew. When Bill called her into the room, the woman tried to hold out her hand.

"You've been awfully good," she said. "Bill will thank you for me. He has forgiven me everything. I never wronged anybody but Bill. He has wiped that out, so I guess God will keep His end up with Bill and square everything."

Bill was holding her hand as she passed. Mary was on her knees in prayer.

Together they went to the funeral, the only mourners.

Together they took up again the routine of life, neither exchanging a word about the dead woman or her past. Bill's manner altered. He was silent now, neither bitter nor savage, and the office wondered.

Spring came. Mary entered the office early one Saturday with her arms full of apple blossoms. She put some on Bill's desk alongside Marcus Aurelius. His eyes lighted as he came in and saw them.

"Apple blossoms!" he cried, turning to her. "Where did you get them?"

"From Miss Agnew—she's Mrs. Renton now and lives in the country. She writes me the whole place is covered with them."

"I'd love to see it," he sighed and went on with his work.

Every few minutes he buried his face in the fragrance and glanced at the girl by the typewriter. When the half holiday began he went over to her.

"Mary, shall we go and see the country of the apple blossoms?"

So they went; and they came back hand in hand.

Some weeks after they were married, Bill saw on her dressing table a box of rouge, a bottle of hair dye, some carmine salve. Was everything she had done just a trick to win him? He remembered the flask of whiskey and called her in.

"Shall I throw these out?" he asked.

She, too, remembered and understood.

"Throw them out!" she laughed. "I was not using them. I kept them as souvenirs. After all the manicure girl *was* right—paint and powder did get me a husband."

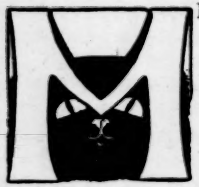
She looked up archly, and he kissed her. So she held up her lips again, and—

IN THE July number: ON THE BERRY BUSH *by Anna Brownell Dunaway,* in which Auntie Miller discusses Heaven-made marriages, particularly one that has come under her observation.

THE LOCOMOTIVE WITH THE EVIL EYE

By LOUIS FITZGERALD

From the beginning of time, as the author points out, a flame seems to have exercised a peculiar influence over the human mind. The nature of that influence may depend perhaps upon a man's conscience, as in the case of Black Jack Alvarez and engine Forty-Thirty-Seven's headlight.



"MIDNIGHT" Cassidy opened the throttle and listened solicitously to the Forty-Thirty-Seven as she took hold, easily and surely, her valves harmonizing with the exhaust, and her boiler throbbing and sweating as the drivers spun around. Then, as he forced the throttle wider, heard the familiar response, and listened appreciatively as was his wont to the contented hum of her well oiled machinery, "Midnight" Cassidy settled back comfortably and grinned at his fireman.

There are some engineers to whom a locomotive is merely a delicate organism of iron and steel, devoid of sense and soul. These men attempt to find a mechanical explanation for every peculiarity that an engine develops. From engineers they graduate into master mechanics and superintendents of motive power and become fat and logy and learn to look at life through the medium of a blue print.

There are others, and they belong to a passing generation, to whom a locomotive is a feminine creature of amazing tendencies with all the moods and temperament common to the sex. Such men love their engines, swear by them and fight for them. In defense of this clan again let it be insisted upon that not even a master mechanic can wholly explain why two engines, so identical except for their number plates, will develop characters so opposite as to lead to the conclusion that they possess nothing in common.

Put two such engines in the shops and interchange their parts as easily as you change your stockings, and one will still respond smartly to every demand, and the other remain a balky and stubborn old cow, too lazy to get out of her own way. For love of an engineer who cared for her and humored her cantankerous nature, a naturally rebellious locomotive has been known to mellow with advancing years.

So it was with the Forty-Thirty-Seven under the spell of the affection lavished on her by Midnight Cassidy. In the ten years that followed the day when the young, blue-eyed Irishman first piloted her over the Tuscon division, the Forty-Thirty-Seven had turned from an obstinate and peevish old shrew into a complacent and well-behaved spouse.

Cassidy climbed to his seat each midnight with the feeling of a man sitting down by the hearthstone of his home. When he opened the throttle and the Forty-Thirty-Seven responded, it was the renewal of the conjugal bond between them. The drumming of the engine, the rush of the exhaust and the mingled noise of all the engine's component parts was the unified voice of a partner speaking a language that Midnight understood. When his girl was happy and contented, she told him; if she was cold and needed comforting, her rheumatic wheezing warned him; and he nursed her into warmth and activity, displaying all the tender solicitude of a lover.

Then one cool, clear, morning, as they were rambling through the countryside, a girl in a blue gingham dress came to the porch of a nearby farmhouse and waved a friendly hand at them.

Cassidy was looking for the girl on the following morning and he returned her wave. Each trip she came closer to the track, until one day she stood by the fence that marked the right of way and

laughed up at him as Cassidy thundered by.

"You ain't jealous, old girl, are you?" he chuckled to his rumbling spouse the following day, as he drafted a shaky note and tossed it to the girl in blue. The note gave Cassidy's name and asked permission to call. It intimated that the reply should be fastened to a long stick and handed up to him as he came by on the next trip. The reply was forthcoming in the designated way, and Cassidy slowed up to get it.

So that was the way that Ellen Stevens became Mrs. "Midnight" Cassidy and went to live in a little cottage in a big city, where a pout and a baby stare and a love of admiration are dubious assets.

It seemed to Cassidy that he had achieved all that the world held for him. His affection for the Forty-Thirty-Seven deepened apace as he confided to her all the new found joys centered in the worship of his wife.

Now, Caesar's wife was above suspicion, but her husband didn't work nights and sleep most of the day, nor was he an engineer who loved a locomotive. Moreover, history fails to record that Caesar's wife was a farmer's girl, innocent of the ways of such men as "Black Jack" Alvarez.

Cassidy's love for his girl wife was too sanguine for any of his comrades to venture to restrain. So they said nothing of the young, olive-skinned fireman with white teeth and a way with women, who was seen too much in the company of Midnight's wife, but they shook their heads as men do under certain circumstances.

Cassidy found the farewell note on the kitchen table, and the world went from under him. Mechanically, he got his own supper in the deserted cottage, and mechanically he moved thereafter. It was as though a healthy vine had been severed at the roots. Cassidy, for a while, bore up as bravely as ever, and then began slowly to fade away. Sued on the grounds of cruelty! That was something to laugh about. The big Irishman couldn't have been cruel to a Gila monster. The suit went by default, and Mrs. Cassidy married the man with the white teeth and the way with women.

In the dim light of the roundhouse, the Irishman's hands went around his enemy's throat, and some of the boys were for interfering and some were not. But Cassidy waved them all back.

"Hear me," he said. "This man stole my wife. You boys know it. If he makes her happy, all right. But just so sure as there is a God above us, if that little woman suffers, this man answers for it."

With that he released his hold and everybody went on about his duty.

The placating purr of the Forty-Thirty-Seven could not heal the wound in the soul of Midnight Cassidy. His fireman came to the roundhouse one night and found the engineer's body spread on the track in the wavering light of the Forty-Thirty-Seven's headlight. There was a ragged hole in the right temple and a revolver lying close by. No eye save that of Cassidy's faithful first love had seen the tragedy. That was probably as the Irishman had intended it.

The Alvarez marriage did not last. That sort of union seldom does. The Mexican's gentle ways were but a mask, dropped when the need for it no longer existed. Bruised in body and spirit, the girl who had waved her way into Cassidy's heart disappeared one day, whither none knew or cared.

The story might well end right here, only that Cassidy had *loved* the Forty-Thirty-Seven, and with his hand upon her throttle through many a weary night had revealed the bitterness of his soul. Then, too, there are some things about a locomotive, as has been said, which no master mechanic can hope to understand.

So it happened that the Forty-Thirty-Seven, unfamiliar with her peculiarities, bucked a little on her customary run. She walked over a crossing point one night as the east bound freight was chugging past, and the crew of the latter train alighted to see if they could be of any help. Billy Kellogg was the engineer; the fireman was Alvarez.

"Blamed if I can see what sent her off," said the Mexican. "The switch is closed."

The engineer of the Forty-Thirty-Seven swore despairingly.

"Cassidy's old cow," he mourned, "damndest thing on the division. A little more and she'd have been into you fellows. I can't understand it."

Alvarez climbed back into his cab and stared thoughtfully at the disabled locomotive. He seemed again to feel the pressure of fingers around his throat and the voice of Cassidy, "—if she suffers, this man answers for it." The Mexican was inclined to be superstitious. His moody silence attracted Kellogg's notice.

"Thinking of Cassidy?" inquired the engineer maliciously.

"That's my business, not yours," answered the fireman sullenly.

The next night as they passed the Forty-Thirty-Seven, he stared at the headlight again. That was the beginning.

FROM the beginning of time, a flame seems to have exercised a peculiar influence over the human mind. Our early ancestors paid their devotions first to the sun. Then they became fire worshippers. Candles and lighted lamps are still a significant accompanient to many forms of church service.

In the glowing coals upon our hearthstone, and in the embers of our camp fire, there is a hypnotic spell for all of us. The wildest animal of the forest dares not attack a human being armed only with a blazing fagot.

Those who drive much in motor cars at night know the helpless confusion of the senses when confronting the undimmed headlights of another machine. Consider then the effect upon the crews of locomotives when two monsters of the rail thunder toward one another at night in tunnels and around curving tracks.

Thus a strange, unfathomable terror gripped the soul of Black Jack Alvarez as, night after night, at some point of the run his uneasy eyes met the accusing orb of Cassidy's old locomotive. It was though in the baleful glare of her headlight he read a summons to some inevitable fate. In vain he tried to reason down his fear. Each meeting gave to the on-rushing shaft of light a more sinister appearance.

On one pretext or another, he began getting down from his seat to dodge the glare. The engineer on the right hand side of a double track is protected from passing trains by the body of his own engine, but the fireman gets the full effect of the blinding light, the noise and the rush of wind. The time came when Alvarez could no longer hide his terror from Kellogg.

"For the love of Pete," protested the engineer nervously, "are you going crazy? First thing you know you'll have me seeing things, too. Get up there and forget it."

"Well, look at her yourself," muttered the fireman, and Kellogg stared. Like the eyes in a portrait, the Forty-Thirty-Seven seemed to be looking at them, and them alone. Thereafter, Kellogg, too, experienced a chill up and down his spine when the engine aproached, and breathed a sigh of relief when she was safely passed.

Then one night, that which both men had begun to expect came to pass. Rolling along with a string of important manifests, they received a copy of an order at Silverton giving Extra Forty-Thirty-Seven West right of way over them between Hillsdale and Segunda with a wait at Roslin until 10.45 P. M.

Five miles from the waiting point, they were swinging along expecting to get into clear in plenty of time.

"I think—" began Kellogg, but he never finished. The headlight of a locomotive suddenly flashed on them. It looked like the sun coming down the track.

"Seemed like I could have reached out and lit my pipe on her," explained Kellogg afterwards.

For one brief moment, Alvarez remained petrified with horror. Then he leaped like a cat for the gangway on the engineer's side.

"Jump!" he shrieked and hurled himself into the darkness.

Kellogg was in the act of shutting off, closing the throttle and applying the air, but the fireman's compelling cry unnerved him and he left his task unfinished.

By the code of the story book the brave engineer always sticks to his post in the face of death. In real life he is usually into the mess before he has had time to

realize what is happening. There is no time to think. Instinct alone remains and that bids him either leap or crouch behind the boiler head. Alvarez's panicky command decided the issue for the engineer. He unloaded almost on top of his fireman, and the train, with its momentum only slackened, rolled on toward the Forty-Thirty-Seven.

Rain had fallen the night before and softened the borrow pits into which each man rolled. They lay there with the breath knocked out of them, and every muscle at tension to meet the shock of the collision.

One minute they waited and nothing happened. Two minutes—three—four—five, long as the tortures of hell, and Kellogg could stand it no longer.

"What in blazes," he muttered, and clambered up the embankment. He was in time to hear a noise no more terrifying than the slamming of a heavy door. Down the track he made out the rear end of his train silhouetted against a confusion of light that told him two headlights were together. A blare of shouting was borne up to him.

With that he came to life and ran forward. Behind him, there was a pattering of feet as Alvarez followed. They ran until they tired and then fell into a shambling trot only to break into a run again as their wind came back. Alternately they walked and ran as men in a nightmare and all the time their bewilderment increased. They seemed in a great treadmill that baffled all their efforts to advance.

"Carramba!" panted the Mexican. "She's no use. Better to go away."

Kellogg went doggedly on alone, and in an hour that seemed eternity he came upon a cluster of trainmen standing in the circle of light caused by two locomotives standing nose to nose, his own engine with the front truck off the rails.

Extra Forty-Thirty-Seven was at Roslin, where her order called for her to be, and he and Alvarez had jumped from their engine when exactly *five miles away by the tape line.*

Excited trainmen encircled him. They accused him of being drunk—then of being crazy. He was too dazed to defend himself. It was the brotherhood that came to his defense at the official inquiry, and established, by the testimony of veteran engineers, that atmospheric conditions at Roslin, due to the intense heat and the fact that the roadbed was below sea level had been known to make it impossible to tell whether a headlight or a fusee was advancing or receding, much less how far away it was. So they were disciplined, and the superintendent let it go at that.

"Here's where you and me part company," vowed Kellogg.

The Mexican grinned.

"You said something," he confirmed. "I don't fire any hog on this division, so long as they let that she-devil run the rails. I got my transfer to the Western this morning."

The superintendent of the Tuscon division next day wrote the following letter:

"Pursuant to Mr. Blake's instructions of the 22d., I am sending you additional motive power, consisting of two light and three heavy engines. Feel that we will require their use again in a few weeks when the peak of the fruit movement is reached."

He put the letter in the outgoing basket on his desk, in a pile that contained the transfer papers and record of fireman Alvarez, and went out to lunch. Thus does Fate toy with the dice box.

THE Western division, near the town of Niles, holds a triangular bit of track where the rails from Stockton and San Jose converge to form two sides of a "Y," with a connecting switching track as the crossover. A night yard crew was making up.

"Curse these Tuscon cows," grumbled the engineer, "she's low on water again." He consulted his watch.

"We've just got time to fill her up and get back to the siding before first 91 comes along. She ain't due for twenty minutes. Let's go."

Headlight dimmed for the siding, the thirsty engine was temporarily rolled on the main track and stopped at the water tank. While the fireman dragged the spout into place, the engineer alighted and walked around the sighing engine with his oil can.

"Forty-Thirty-Seven," he mused. "I'll

bet you've seen some service in your day, old girl. MY GOD!"

Around the curve in the track there thundered down upon the lone engine a northbound extra freight.

In the glare of his headlight, the engineer of the oncoming train glimpsed the Forty-Thirty-Seven waiting there like a phantom in the dark. A figure in overalls waved at him frantically, and then leaped from the track.

The brakes shrieked; the train reacted violently—bucked and surged ahead—bucked once more—slowed—crashed into the engine, shivered and stopped. The crew on the ground had fled.

Forth from the extra locomotive which had settled back on its rear trucks there tumbled a fireman who collapsed on the ground, babbling like a madman. From the other side came an engineer, who gazed in bewilderment at the empty track ahead of him. It was quite clear.

The voice of the fireman rose on the night air:

"The Forty—the Forty-Thirty-Seven," he clattered, "Cassidy! Ellen! Forgive! Oh, I saw you, I saw you. There—there—don't you see?"

"Shut up," remonstrated the engineer, "we hit something all right; but where the devil did it go?"

As if in answer, there came a driving crash as the Forty-Thirty-Seven, with the reverse lever knocked open by the impact, jammed her way backwards into a string of freight cars just passing on to the farther end of the Y.

Meanwhile, the crew of Cassidy's old girl, having ducked to avoid the crash, came hurrying up out of the darkness to explain matters and take their medicine.

"No one hurt," comforted the engineer of the extra, "but my fireman has gone nutty. Them Mexicans go to pieces easy."

"She was waiting for me," muttered Alvarez dully. "Always she waits."

They led him to the home of the station agent, and left him there for the night. In the morning he was gone.

The superintendent of the Western division looked up from his work a fortnight later with a frown:

"I think you are foolish, Alvarez," he said. "You are forfeiting all your seniority rights and an opportunity for advancement. I'll give you the recommendation you desire, but you'll find the boiler room of a steamer a lot worse than a locomotive. Who does the letter go to?"

"Chief engineer of the Santa Rosa, sir," answered the fireman. "I have my own reasons for wanting to make a change."

"Suit yourself," concluded the superintendent, and handed him the letter.

RIDING heavily on a north sea, in cool, clear weather, the Santa Rosa nosed her way southward from San Francisco along the coast, bound for Los Angeles. Her passenger list included two hundred people with many women and children.

At midnight, the steamer was half way on her journey, with the fourth officer standing watch, his eyes searching for the Point Arguello lighthouse that would give him his bearings. His gaze finally picked up a gleaming beacon to port at an unexpected angle.

"Funny," he muttered, "we must have passed the point," and he altered the course of the vessel accordingly.

Fifteen minutes later the light showed to port from the same angle, but appreciably nearer.

The fourth officer, vaguely uneasy, again altered the course of his vessel and studied the light through his binoculars. He could not understand why the vessel did not seem to gain on the light. *Suddenly the gleaming eye vanished.*

At 12.45 A. M., the Santa Rosa smashed on the rocks, three hundred feet off the shore line and two miles west of Arguello, shuddered convulsively from stem to stern, and settled down to a steady pounding.

"Saw the lighthouse right off port, sir, a short time ago," reported the fourth officer to the captain, who had assumed command. "but the light suddenly went out. There it is again, sir, see."

A powerful light shot out high above the surf line, topping the masts of the stricken vessel and the signal rockets that were going up from her deck.

"Can't be the lighthouse," said the cap-

tain. "We're on the point, instead of passing it. Get a line ashore."

On the beach, a bonfire blazed up, testifying that the vessel's plight was known. Meanwhile the tide was driving the Santa Rosa closer in, and she began to break up.

"No use to try the boats, sir," reported the first officer, "the surf's too heavy. But we've got the lines ashore."

First with a basket and a pulley, and later by means of a raft, guided by ropes from both the shore and the steamer, the women and children received first attention.

The raft held eight women and children and an officer. No sooner had it cast off than a man in a fireman's blouse leaped toward it from the lower deck.

"Only women and children here," shouted the officer, "get off, or you'll swamp us."

But the fear of death was on the man and he pulled himself from the water and grappled with the officer. Simultaneously, a great wave struck broadside on, and the raft spilled its contents into the surf. The searchlights of the ship disclosed the forms of women and children in the shallow water, and a dozen men rushed from the shore in an effort to reach them. In the confusion, no one saw the man who had precipitated the action as succeeding waves hurled him against one rock and then another, sucked him down again, and finally spewed him upon the sand a hundred yards further down.

A few moments he lay there, insensible, a dark shadow on the sand, and then painfully and slowly began to crawl away from the thundering sea and up the cliff. Behind him was the clutching hand of death, above there glowed a steady light that promised shelter and warmth for his shattered body. He dragged himself wearily along, until at the point of utter exhaustion. He reached the top and staggered up in the face of the glowing light. Then the wild cry of a man who surrenders his soul rent the darkness unheeded.

In the gray of the early morning, when passengers and crew had apparently all been brought to safety, a group of tired railroad men came across the body of Black Jack Alvarez, face downward in front of a work train, the engine of which was gazing peacefully out to sea. He had been dead for several hours.

"Now, what do you know about that!" exclaimed the station agent. "It must have been her headlight they saw all the time; and she *did* cost a life after all. 'Forty-Thirty-Seven'—say, ain't that one of them Tuscon engines we were supposed to be working home? Why didn't you get her out of here yesterday?"

THE SERPENT BOWL *by Mary D. Fowler* is another story for July. It is about a chemist who is broken in health and goes back to his boyhood home to recuperate. In the laboratory where, as a boy, he manufactured such standard remedies as "Frog Mixture" and "Snake-blood Ointment," he experiments with a new elixir of life.

FRIENDS ON BIG THUNDER

By HAPSBURG LIEBE

Both convincing and timely, though not to be generally approved, is the expression of friendship which greets a Tennessee mountaineer when he returns from service overseas.

ERGEANT David Hatton, late of the National Army, was going home to his mother's cabin on Big Thunder Mountain, Tennessee, and he was a little happier than he had ever been before. Not that he had found fault with the drafting or with the army; he had gone easily from the paths of a timber jack to those of a soldier and he had won his two promotions quickly. He knew his mother wanted him back, and he knew his sweetheart wanted him back, and always life had been as bright as new gold to him; that is why he was happier than he had ever been before. Rosemary McLane had not known how to write, and neither had his mother; but the faithfulness of both, one as much as the other, was entirely beyond question to him. It had been a trifle difficult, sometimes, to explain to his comrades just why he never had letters from home; but—well, he did it satisfactorily, and always without lying outright. A Hatton couldn't lie outright.

And no more could a McLane!

He reached the little lowland town, Jamesville, at three in the morning, and immediately set out to walk to Big Thunder. It was more than twenty miles of rugged going on dim and tortuous mountain trails, but Dave Hatton didn't mind that at all. Out of the joy of his heart he sang as he went, and he seemed so stalwart and so fine in his khaki uniform, and so proud of his sergeant's chevrons and his marksmanship badge. He laughed at the saucy "boomer" squirrels that came out with daybreak and chattered at him from the nearby trees; he imitated the birds that caroled at the rising sun, and felt boyishly delighted because he deceived them.

The first Big Thunder dwelling he reached was the rambling, hewn-log house of "Ole Jam'paw" Whitsun. Old Whitsun was a god, a sort of perpetual Santa Claus, to the Big Thunder kiddies, and he was a favorite with the grownups as well; the kiddies had innocently nicknamed him while trying to call him "Old Grandpa." Once he had been both a magistrate and the law of this section of the mountains; he was now a magistrate no longer, but he came very near to being the law still. He sat on his vine-covered front porch, this fine May Sunday morning, when Hatton hailed him merrily from the road:

"H'lo, there Ole Jam'paw! Guess who's back!"

Whitsun rose. He remembered that voice. He fairly ran to the gate, and shook hands with Hatton with tears in his kindly eyes.

"Dave," said he, "I'll be danged ef I ain't plum' awful glad to see ye. How big ye look! As straight as a pine tree, too. Now mebbe ye mother won't be tickled to see ye! I reckon she's at meetin'—at the Pickett's Cove meetin'house—be danged ef we ain't shore got some preacher there now, Dave—I—I'd ha' went, but—it's the fust Sunday I've missed in ten years—nothin' but death couldn't keep ye mother back—"

The old hillman had become badly upset about something, and Hatton saw it. And Whitsun, he knew, was not easily upset.

"Why didn't you go, too, Jam'paw?" Hatton put the question in a manner that wouldn't admit of evasion.

Whitsun pulled a splinter from the fence, took out his knife, combed his al-

most white beard with his knotty fingers, opened his knife, spat at a grasshopper and missed it, and leaned weakly against a gatepost as he began to whittle aimlessly.

"Ye'll find it out anyhow, Dave. Rosemary McLane is a bein' married to a feller name o' Highlow Jack Hamer in the meetin'house to-day, Dave. I wisht I may die ef I wouldn't a heap ruther drap dead 'an to haf to tell ye, son. I jest had to, or I wouldn't ha' done it; be danged ef I would. That's why I stayed away from meetin'. I couldn't bear to see it. Because I know some things some other folks mebbe don't know, Dave. I know Rosemary ain't a-marryin' that lowdown, gamblin' rake because she wants to, Dave—dang his rotten hide! She promised to do it to save her brother, Bubber McLane—a good feller, Bubber; too good, mebbe, and too easy led off—and she wouldn't break her promise—"

Ole Jam'paw choked and stopped trying to talk. Dave Hatton stood fixedly, like a post, or a tree, and stared with eyes that saw nothing. His jaw was set, and he was white.

"Rosemary—married," he muttered after a heavy, silent moment. "Rosemary—married."

Whitsun nodded. Came another heavy moment of silence; then Hatton took a firmer grip on himself and faced the matter bravely.

"I knowed Jack Hamer. Met him in the timber camps. He was a bully; I seen him grind a man's face under his bootcalks onct. But that ain't the main big thing about it, Jam'paw; the main big thing is, he ain't clean. He's dirty. He ain't fitten to marry Rosemary. Tell me all about it, Jam'paw; begin at the beginnin', and tell me all about it."

"All right." Whitsun bit the point off the splinter and spat it out. He closed his knife. He threw the splinter away, and dropped his knife into his pocket. "A heap of it, Dave, I couldn't prove. Rickollect that. But I'm a old man, and I've seed a heap o' human nacher, and I know danged well I'm right about it. It was thisaway, Dave:

"Bubber McLane and Rosemary still lives with their Aunt Polly, at the old home place. Rosemary was foolish about Bubber; she allus was, as you yeself know. The day he was eighteen, Bubber went to some loggin' outfit over on Rock Creek and got him a job as a cutter. On the fust payday he had, he went with the crew to Jamesville, and there they had a danged big time—too big a time, mebbe; I understand they painted the town red and bordered her with a bilious yaller. A feller name o' Patterson was shot and killed, and Bubber was arrested and jailed fo' the crime. Highlow Jack was the only witness, and he wouldn't say nothin' much about it until he'd come out here and broke the news to Rosemary. He hung around out here fo' sev'ral days. When he went back to Jamesville, Rosemary, heartbroke, had promised to marry him; and she let on to people, fo' her pride's sake, that she loved him.

"Well, I'll hurry along with it, Dave. They had Bubber's trial, and Highlow Jack swore the bullet 'at killed Patterson come through a window; swore he saw the flash o' the gun outside, and seed the glass break, and ketched Patterson as he fell.

"It was gen'ally messed up, but that's the meat of it. Highlow's word wasn't gilt-edge, by no means, but it was enough to throw the balance in favor o' Bubber, and they turned Bubber loose. Bubber tried to pe'suade Rosemary to break her promise to Highlow, but she wouldn't do it; the McLanes, she says, allus does jest edzactly what they says they'll do. Then Bubber tried to buy Highlow Jack off, but the' wasn't nothin' a-workin' in that line, not a danged thing. And so—

"And so they're to be married at the meetin'house to-day, Dave; I reckon it's about time it was a-bein' pulled off now. Which is why I never went; I couldn't bear to see it, Dave, danged ef I could. I—where are ye a-goin' to, son?"

"I'm a-goin' to the meetin'house. Mebbe they ain't had the weddin' yit. I want to see Rosemary. I can tell by lookin' at her whether she loves Highlow Jack or not; Highlow had a way wi' women, all right, and you might be mistaken. The's a

chanct in a thousand, and I'm shore a-goin' to see about that one chanct."

"Wait; I believe I'll go wi' ye, Dave."

Ole Jam'paw opened the gate and limped after Hatton. They walked in silence the one mile that lay between Whitsun's home and the Pickett's Cove log church.

When they had reached a point within a hundred yards of the meeting-house, Hatton turned into the laurels to his right, and Whitsun limped hastily after him. Hatton threaded the thick undergrowth in the easy manner of a born woodsman, and soon he had come up to an open window directly behind the rough pulpit. The sight that greeted his gaze fairly chilled him. Before the minister stood his pretty, brown-eyed Rosemary and the smooth, sleek brute, Highlow Jack Hamer; their right hands were clasped together, and Rosemary, white-faced, was saying tremulously: "I do."

Dave Hatton, too, was white-faced. Both his big, strong hands gripped the weather-beaten window sill suddenly, and at that moment a strapping young hillman dove from the laurels and caught Hatton from behind by both arms. Hatton wheeled to find himself staring into "Bubber" McLane's sunburned, boyish countenance.

"Don't go an' spoil nothin', Dave," whispered Bubber, tensely. "Don't go and spoil nothin'! Everything's all right—git me?"

With that, Bubber disappeared in the undergrowth like a spirit. Hatton turned to the window again. He saw, at a fleeting glance, his old mother sitting with her head bowed. And then he caught Rosemary's eyes with his own and held them for one instant.

When she saw him, Rosemary Hamer did a thing she had never done before and in all likelihood would never do again. She fainted. Once more Hatton put his hands on the weather-beaten window sill. Ole Jam'paw caught him by both arms and pulled him backward.

"It's done now, Dave," Whitsun whispered. "It's done now. She's jest fainted; she'll be all right in a minute. Come on wi' me, Dave, dang it. I think we'd better go now, my boy; eh?"

"Mebbe," Hatton said slowly, under his breath. "Mebbe we had. But I'll wait at the door and go along home wi' my mother. I—I've still got her, thank God! Have they—have they done already had preachin'?"

"Yeuh, son, honey. They had preachin' afore the weddin'. As soon as that song is over, they'll be a-comin' out. We might as well go around to the door now, Dave, dang it; hadn't we?"

"I reckon so," answered heart-broken Hatton. "Yes, we might as well."

As the people began to pour from the meetinghouse, Sergeant David Hatton saw that there were few men except grandfathers among them, but this fact did not get any marked attention from him until afterward. It was a very silent congregation, a strongly sympathetic congregation, and many were the frowning glances that were directed toward the back of the villainous groom as he piloted his pale bride of minutes toward the trail that led to her home. They had seen through her pitiful subterfuges; they knew!

Then, all of a sudden, Highlow Jack Hamer stopped and stooped to pick up a brass watch that had been placed carefully in the centre of the trail, and his new wife walked on a few yards ahead—and then half a dozen rifles thundered out as one from the two nearby mountainsides, and Hamer crumpled, dead when his face struck the dust!

Rosemary reached him first. She saw at once that she was free of the hateful bonds she had welded about her rather than break the promise of a McLane. Oblivious of the gathering crowd, she clasped her hands at her throat, and turned her topaz eyes upward in a wordless little prayer of gratitude to the Most High for her deliverance.

Ole Jam'paw Whitsun hastened up and took charge of the situation. He ran his now severe old eyes over the people of Big Thunder Mountain.

"We live our own lives," he said finally, his voice ringing like a voice of benediction. "Ef anything's ever said about it, let it be this and only this: 'He jest drapped dead.' Rickollect that. *'He jest drapped dead.'*"

A week later, Dave Hatton saw Bubber McLane at Ole Jam'paw's.

"Rose was a wonderin' why you hadn't never been over to see us, Dave," said Bubber. "Say, Dave, I never killed Patterson; but I think I know who did kill him; I think it was Highlow; but I couldn't prove nothin', y'see. And ye needn't be a-thinkin' I was one o' them 'at shot Highlow Jack, neither, because I shore wasn't! But I come might' nigh a-bein' one of 'em. I meant to do it, and I had my finger on the trigger, when them other rifles barked and beat me to it. Dave, the' must ha' been twenty men had sneaked out, every one of 'em unbeknownst to the others, to set Rose free when she walked from the meetin'house! We've got friends here on Big Thunder, Dave, dang ye good old sojer hide!"

THE JULY NUMBER

DORNER AND THE DEACONS *by Ramsey Benson* is the report of a station-platform debate. To be exact, the deacons do not play up to the title role; they stand around like a stage army "at ease," while Mrs. Peg McKim takes the center of the stage with Dorner. The latter represents a considerable part if not the whole of the meat trust and needs only the words "Meat Trust" written on his vest to complete the identification. The question for debate is, "Resolved, that Bambury's two churches should be consolidated." Dorner really does not care a hoot whether the town has two churches or two dozen; he just happens to be in the mood to talk about "economic waste." And while he has it all his own way with the deacons, he meets a worthy opponent when Mrs. Peg McKim leaves her wash tub to defend the negative.

SAIL AND WASSAIL *by Edwin Dial Torgerson* is especially appropriate for July. It recounts certain events in connection with a cruise of the auxiliary sloop, Wampus Cat. The outstanding feature of the cruise is the unnatural disposition of a case of beer and a dozen quarts of ten-year-old whiskey.

The Black Cat Club

JUST HIS LUCK

JUST HIS LUCK describes with sympathetic understanding the sufferings of a sensitive soul which, suddenly afflicted with a desire to grow, finds the shell of habit hard to split. For Dunreith Cary's particular brand of bad luck is the result of his own characteristics, however much he is inclined to blame it on that stern step-mother, Fate. For instance, when the ladies appear, Cary's shy, reticent, unassertive ways propel him only so far as the mules' heads, while the conceited Prewer lands in the motor car.

That his reticence has its limits, and indicates neither stupidity nor gullibility, but insufficient stimulus, is shown by the incident in the hotel office when Cary finds all the rooms taken. His prompt solution of the problem promises a turn in his luck, when he becomes sufficiently aroused.

In this manner, the various incidents are not mere isolated happenings, but are strung together on the thread of Cary's individuality.

Bit by bit, the author sketches a faithful portrait of Cary, enabling the reader to know him intimately. He is tall, firm-jawed, broad-shouldered, red-cheeked, black-browed, handsome enough to attract even the Azalea Girl, since Prewer admits Cary's good-looks. This frank admiration of another man's looks is rather unusual, but a bit of dialogue that characterizes the patronizing Prewer, as well as the retiring Cary. Too, Cary is serious, shy, sensitive, self-conscious, lacking in assertiveness except as occasion demands, but with plenty of ambition, sticktoitiveness, and ability to keep his own counsel. He is lovable, so the Azalea Girl's love for him is natural.

The introspection caused by the various humiliating incidents Cary experiences, is excellently done, reminding one of Booth Tarkington's callow heroes—"weltering in shame." Cary's mixture of boyish shyness and manly self-respect compare favorably with Prewer's perpetual conceit, and explains the girl's choice. His change of luck is the reward of good business acumen in standing pat after learning the girl's identity. Almost any other young business enthusiast would have rushed off to win the father in order to gain the daughter. Cary proves that the opposite tactics work equally well.—*Harriette Wilbur*

WHEN THE RED SNOW FALLS

If American short story writers wrote only about things that counted they would soon place our literature on the same plane with the Russian and French productions. They have imagination, ability to express themselves and a wonderfully entertaining style but there is a glittering sterility about their work which is baffling and provoking.

Take for instance this story of Chart Pitt's. He has hit upon a theme which calls for excellent treatment, his study of the setting gives one a wonderful feeling of fidelity to truth and actuality, yet the story is merely an adventure story of no particular interest. The characters in it have moved about, acted up to the situations in which they were put, and still, when you close the magazine not one of them stands out sufficiently to disturb your night's slumber.—*Henry V. Miller*

Mr. Pitt usually manages his horrors skillfully, but this time he works with much too free a brush, more like a house-painter than an artist. Consequently, his story is mainly an orgy of terror, of horror for horror's sake, to show how gruesome a tale he can tell.

In fact, the red snow is but a minor horror in the list. The devilish whaler, the camp, the wind,, the native burial ground, the smallpox scourge, the scurvey, the madness of the men, their fights, the mutiny, Blake's treachery, poison—all are as important as the red snow, some even more important. Mr. Pitt seems to have made a list of all the dreadful things that could happen in the polar zone, and bunched them into one story. Too bad, too, for he used up enough atmosphere and incidents for half-a-dozen other stories.

—*Harriette Wilbur*

THE GREAT HORN HAYFORK

THE GREAT HORN HAYFORK is a good "popular" short story, to my mind; for the purpose of popular short stories is to furnish ten or fifteen minutes' worth of enjoyable reading matter, a compound of romance generally, occasional humor, together with a grain or two of learning. The romance in the story which we are considering is evident—the little lovers' tiff between Mully McDade and Marie Henkle, which ends in the conventional kiss-honeyed embrace. Humor—the story is filled with it. The recital of Mully's increasing misfortune and proportionately ascending irateness reached *my* funny-bone, at least. And at times the way in which Mr. Alexander says things is positively wonderful; as, for instance, when he speaks of Mully McDade's uncertain warbling of "Nearer, My God, To Thee" when he is left swinging in uncomfortable proximity to the ethereal blue. And, to conclude, the story has the desired bit of learning, and more.

—*Anthony M. Benedik*

THE SPIRIT WAS WILLING

THE SPIRIT WAS WILLING has a number of technical errors. The climax is reached

without giving one any clues, the story does not "lead up;" we do not expect Fogarty to be so fine since his character portrayal and even his description do not seem real. Fogarty really begins to live on the very last page. Up to that time no inkling is given that he is the kind of man who would rather go to "heaven with one hand than to hell with two" just because someone "believes in him." Then too, the point of view is often unnecessarily shifted, breaking up the unified effect. Furthermore, is it not improbable that at the very beginning Fogarty would reform so quickly? We are even led to believe that he would have been successful had he not been "framed."

—Kay Kasser

THE GRAVEN IMAGE

The single truth about marriage is that it is a disillusioner. The author in the above-mentioned story has shown us the one side of the medal, wherein marriage has disillusioned the woman. We men, of course, do not need any story to depict the other side of the medal. It takes only about three days of matrimony to open a man's eyes. As an old philosopher I once knew described it: "Man naturally places woman on a pedestal, but she always insists on stepping down from it."

Fortunately for the heroine of this story, marriage was not necessary to disillusion her. The grocery-store idol crumbled to bits at first meeting without the discomfitures of registration, wedding-bells, mother's tears, and all the other inanities that usually accompany a maiden's entrance into the blessed state. And contrary to expectations, or rather, to the formula announced above, this brave little heroine in our story learns to appreciate her husband. Instead of his being reduced to the commonplace, to the true husband type as it were, we find him emerging from the plot with a halo about his head. So that, in a measure, our author contradicts herself. In the beginning is was: "But no man is a hero to his wife any more than he is to his valet," paraphrasing the Spanish poverb. In the end it is: "Oh, Grace, blessed of women!" and "I can never make it up to him—never, if I live to be a hundred."

A word as to the other characters. Will Congelton I thought rather well sketched, especially at the end, where quite unexpectedly we learn of his affair with the servant girl. This is a crude, base, feminine touch, to be sure, but if it must be confessed, true, nevertheless. Men are just that ignoble sometimes. As for the husband and wife with whom our heroine is stopping, they are quite "non compos." The husband is a shallow, slangy, gross sort of creature and the wife absolutely devoid of character. Truly, an ideal couple. Temperaments well matched. The only things that could possibly jar that contented family would be such catastrophes as birth and death.

The one outstanding defect in the style of language it seems to me is the author's too frequent and unnecessary use of classical allusions. There is no objection to the use of classic references in speech or writing provided that they do not violate the rules of time and fitness. When they are literally dragged in one gets discomfited. *—Henry V. Miller*

THE HARBINGER

To define and judge the merits of THE HARBINGER, I would say that it was a good, entertaining, and sweetly concluded story that drove home its message.

Without a deeper analysis it impressed me with its simple sincerity, and by reason of its humble naturalness it passed my hands into those of more technical readers from whom I have gained in substance the same impression which the story had already left with me.

We find that Benoni Kemp's philosophy of life was much like many others. He is frankly earnest in his convictions and peculiarly sensitive in his expression. Such qualities as this old man possesses definitely arouse our tender sympathies.

In presentation the story was concisely limited, though interestingly expansive in detail. With conversation of an easy-going quality, and interwoven description sufficiently lengthy to hold the reader's attention, the striking contrast is drawn. Emily and John could have done nothing else. The situation was peacefully provocative of the strong yet convincingly simple conclusion.

—Henry Weston Mahan, Jr.

Note: It is not necessary to criticise every story in this number; nor are you limited to one. Each criticism should be as nearly as possible in the form of a finished essay; it should be more than a synopsis, and it must not exceed five hundred words. Criticisms should be mailed to the BLACK CAT not later than the tenth of the month following the month of issue; i. e., criticisms of this number (June) should be mailed not later than July 10. *The best criticisms will be paid for at the rate of one cent per word* and will be published, with the names of the authors, in the third issue following, which in this case will be the September number. In preparing criticisms, write on one side of the paper only. The name and address should be written at the top of the first sheet of each criticism, and the number of words in each criticism should also be written at the top of the first sheet.

The "OPEN DOOR" For WRITERS

The very authors whose stories are most in demand by magazine editors to-day started their careers by writing stories for the BLACK CAT. Among them are Rupert Hughes, Alice Hegan Rice, Harry Stilwell Edwards, Will N. Harben, Geraldine Bonner, Sewell Ford, Holman Day, Cleveland Moffett, Juliet Wilbur Thompkins, Ellis Parker Butler, Susan Glaspell, and, to mention some of the more recent arrivals among the top-notchers, James Francis Dwyer, Ida M. Evans, Hapsburg Liebe, William Hamilton Osborne, William J. Neidig and Octavus Roy Cohen.

THE BLACK CAT is always at the door to welcome the young writer into the ranks of the professionals. It is always ready to publish the work of the young writer who shows promise, who comes to the front with fresh ideas and the conviction that the "gods have called him."

There is no better way to learn to write than by analyzing the work of other writers. Thus, it was to help the aspiring writer to a quicker understanding of short-story principles that the BLACK CAT CLUB was formed and made a regular feature of the magazine. The idea of the CLUB is simple: It offers the writer an opportunity to master technique by study and criticism of BLACK CAT stories. These criticisms are the writer's "finger exercises." Each month the best critical essays are published with the names of the authors, *and paid for at the rate of one cent per word.* Membership is open to all who subscribe to the magazine. Several members have had stories published in the BLACK CAT and other magazines since joining the CLUB. By studying stories that *have sold* you may learn to write stories that *will sell.*

Enroll to-day and send in your criticism of one or more stories in this number. Each criticism should be as nearly as possible in the form of a finished essay; it should be more than a synopsis, and must not exceed five hundred words. Keep away from extremes. Do not indulge in fulsome praise or petty fault-finding. In preparing criticisms, write on one side of the paper only. The number of words in each criticism should be written at the top of the first sheet, together with the name and address of the author. Criticisms of stories in this number should be mailed to the Black Cat not later than July 10.

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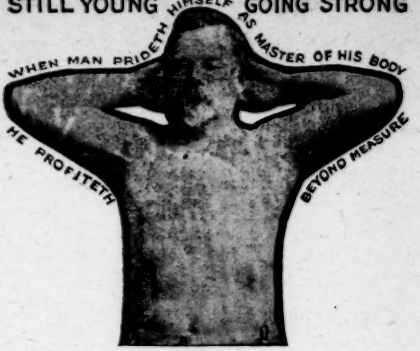

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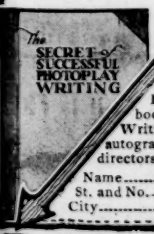

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